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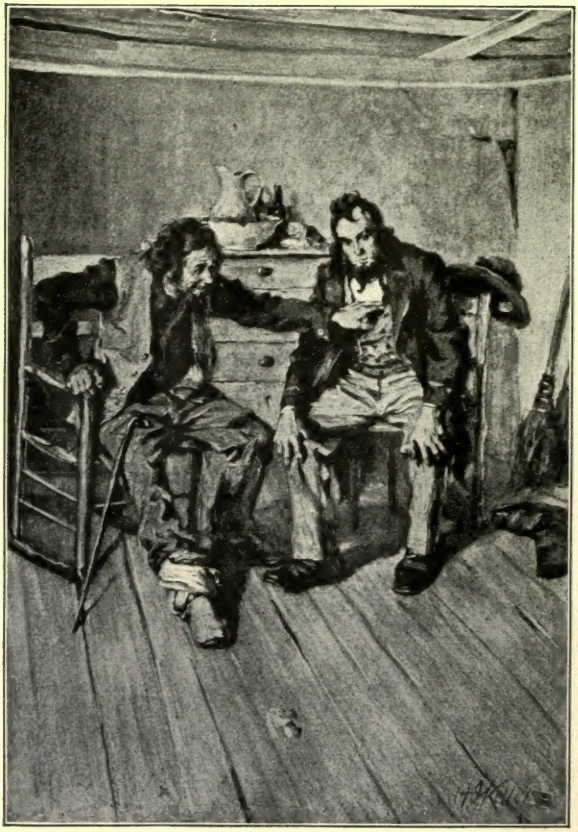

I say — it ain't a her, is it?

NOVELS AND STORIES
OF
BRET HARTE

STORIES IN LIGHT AND SHADOW
FROM SAND HILL TO PINE

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STORIES IN LIGHT AND SHADOW

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STORIES IN LIGHT AND SHADOW

"UNSER KARL"

THE American consul for Schlachtstadt had just turned out of the broad König's Allée into the little square that held his consulate. Its residences always seemed to him to wear that singularly uninhabited air peculiar to a street scene in a theatre. The façades, with their stiff, striped wooden awnings over the windows, were of the regularity, color, and pattern only seen on the stage, and conversation carried on in the street below always seemed to be invested with that perfect confidence and security which surrounds the actor in his painted desert of urban perspective. Yet it was a peaceful change to the other byways and highways of Schlachtstadt which were always filled with an equally unreal and mechanical soldiery, who appeared to be daily taken out of their boxes of "caserne" or "dépôt" and

loosely scattered all over the pretty linden-haunted German town. There were soldiers standing on street corners; soldiers staring woodenly into shop windows; soldiers halted suddenly into stone, like lizards, at the approach of Offiziere; Offiziere lounging stiffly four abreast, sweeping the pavement with their trailing sabres all at one angle. There were cavalcades of red hussars, cavalcades of blue hussars, cavalcades of Uhlans, with glittering lances and pennons — with or without a band — formally parading; there were straggling "fatigues" or "details" coming round the corners; there were dusty, businesslike columns of infantry, going nowhere and to no purpose. And they one and all seemed to be *wound up* — for that service — and apparently always in the same place. In the band of their caps — invariably of one pattern — was a button, in the centre of which was a square opening or keyhole. The consul was always convinced that through this keyhole opening, by means of a key, the humblest caporal wound up his file, the Hauptmann controlled his lieutenants and non-commissioned officers, and even the general himself, wearing the same cap, was subject through his cap to a higher

moving power. In the suburbs, when the supply of soldiers gave out, there were sentry-boxes; when these dropped off, there were "caissons," or commissary wagons. And, lest the military idea should ever fail from out the Schlachtstadt's burgher's mind, there were police in uniform, street-sweepers in uniform; the ticket-takers, guards, and sweepers at the Bahnhof were in uniform, — but all wearing the same kind of cap, with the probability of having been wound up freshly each morning for their daily work. Even the postman delivered peaceful invoices to the consul with his side-arms and the air of bringing dispatches from the field of battle; and the consul saluted, and felt for a few moments the whole weight of his consular responsibility.

Yet, in spite of this military precedence, it did not seem in the least inconsistent with the decidedly peaceful character of the town, and this again suggested its utter unreality; wandering cows sometimes got mixed up with squadrons of cavalry, and did not seem to mind it; sheep passed singly between files of infantry, or preceded them in a flock when on the march; indeed, nothing could be more delightful and innocent than to see

a regiment of infantry in heavy marching order, laden with every conceivable thing they could want for a week, returning after a cheerful search for an invisible enemy in the suburbs, to bivouac peacefully among the cabbages in the market-place. Nobody was ever imposed upon for a moment by their tremendous energy and severe display; drums might beat, trumpets blow, dragoons charge furiously all over the Exercier Platz, or suddenly flash their naked swords in the streets to the guttural command of an officer — nobody seemed to mind it. People glanced up to recognize Rudolf or Max "doing their service," nodded, and went about their business. And although the officers always wore their side-arms, and at the most peaceful of social dinners only relinquished their swords in the hall, apparently that they might be ready to buckle them on again and rush out to do battle for the Fatherland between the courses, the other guests only looked upon these weapons in the light of sticks and umbrellas, and possessed their souls in peace. And when, added to this singular incongruity, many of these warriors were spectacled, studious men, and, despite their lethal weapons, wore a slightly profes-

sional air, and were — to a man — deeply sentimental and singularly simple, their attitude in this eternal Kriegspiel seemed to the consul more puzzling than ever.

As he entered his consulate he was confronted with another aspect of Schlachtstadt quite as wonderful, yet already familiar to him. For, in spite of these "alarums without," which, however, never seem to penetrate beyond the town itself, Schlachtstadt and its suburbs were known all over the world for the manufactures of certain beautiful textile fabrics, and many of the rank and file of those warriors had built up the fame and prosperity of the district over their peaceful looms in wayside cottages. There were great depôts and counting-houses, larger than even the cavalry barracks, where no other uniform but that of the postman was known. Hence it was that the consul's chief duty was to uphold the flag of his own country by the examination and certification of divers invoices sent to his office by the manufacturers. But, oddly enough, these business messengers were chiefly women, — not clerks, but ordinary household servants, and, on busy days, the consulate might have been mistaken for a female registry office,

so filled and possessed it was by waiting Mädchen. Here it was that Gretchen, Lieschen, and Clärchen, in the cleanest of blue gowns, and stoutly but smartly shod, brought their invoices in a piece of clean paper, or folded in a blue handkerchief, and laid them, with fingers more or less worn and stubby from hard service, before the consul for his signature. Once, in the case of a very young Mädchen, that signature was blotted by the sweep of a flaxen braid upon it as the child turned to go; but generally there was a grave, serious business instinct and sense of responsibility in these girls of ordinary peasant origin which, equally with their sisters of France, were unknown to the English or American woman of any class.

That morning, however, there was a slight stir among those who, with their knitting, were waiting their turn in the outer office as the vice-consul ushered the police inspector into the consul's private office. He was in uniform, of course, and it took him a moment to recover from his habitual stiff, military salute, — a little stiffer than that of the actual soldier.

It was a matter of importance! A stranger had that morning been arrested in the town

and identified as a military deserter. He claimed to be an American citizen; he was now in the outer office, waiting the consul's interrogation.

The consul knew, however, that the ominous accusation had only a mild significance here. The term "military deserter" included any one who had in youth emigrated to a foreign country without first fulfilling his military duty to his fatherland. His first experiences of these cases had been tedious and difficult, — involving a reference to his Minister at Berlin, a correspondence with the American State Department, a condition of unpleasant tension, and finally the prolonged detention of some innocent German — naturalized — American citizen, who had forgotten to bring his papers with him in revisiting his own native country. It so chanced, however, that the consul enjoyed the friendship and confidence of the General Adlerkreutz, who commanded the 20th Division, and it further chanced that the same Adlerkreutz was as gallant a soldier as ever cried Vorwärts! at the head of his men, as profound a military strategist and organizer as ever carried his own and his enemy's plans in his iron head and spiked helmet,

and yet with as simple and unaffected a soul breathing under his gray mustache as ever issued from the lips of a child. So this grim but gentle veteran had arranged with the consul that in cases where the presumption of nationality was strong, although the evidence was not present, he would take the consul's parole for the appearance of the "deserter" or his papers, without the aid of prolonged diplomacy. In this way the consul had saved to Milwaukee a worthy but imprudent brewer, and to New York an excellent sausage butcher and possible alderman; but had returned to martial duty one or two tramps or journeymen who had never seen America except from the decks of the ships in which they were "stowaways," and on which they were returned, — and thus the temper and peace of two great nations were preserved.

"He says," said the inspector severely, "that he is an American citizen, but has lost his naturalization papers. Yet he has made the damaging admission to others that he lived several years in Rome! And," continued the inspector, looking over his shoulder at the closed door as he placed his finger beside his nose, "he says he has rela-

tions living at Palmyra, whom he frequently visited. Ach! Observe this unheard-of-and-not-to-be-trusted statement!"

The consul, however, smiled with a slight flash of intelligence. "Let me see him," he said.

They passed into the outer office; another policeman and a corporal of infantry saluted and rose. In the centre of an admiring and sympathetic crowd of Dienstmädchen sat the culprit, the least concerned of the party; a stripling — a boy — scarcely out of his teens! Indeed, it was impossible to conceive of a more innocent, bucolic, and almost angelic looking derelict. With a skin that had the peculiar white and rosiness of fresh pork, he had blue eyes, celestially wide open and staring, and the thick flocculent yellow curls of the sun god! He might have been an overgrown and badly dressed Cupid who had innocently wandered from Paphian shores. He smiled as the consul entered, and wiped from his full red lips with the back of his hand the traces of a sausage he was eating. The consul recognized the flavor at once, — he had smelled it before in Lieschen's little hand-basket.

"You say you lived at Rome?" began

the consul pleasantly. "Did you take out your first declaration of your intention of becoming an American citizen there?"

The inspector cast an approving glance at the consul, fixed a stern eye on the cherubic prisoner, and leaned back in his chair to hear the reply to this terrible question.

"I don't remember," said the culprit, knitting his brows in infantine thought. "It was either there, or at Madrid or Syracuse."

The inspector was about to rise; this was really trifling with the dignity of the municipality. But the consul laid his hand on the official's sleeve, and, opening an American atlas to a map of the State of New York, said to the prisoner, as he placed the inspector's hand on the sheet, "I see you know the names of the *towns* on the Erie and New York Central Railroad. But"—

"I can tell you the number of people in each town and what are the manufactures," interrupted the young fellow, with youthful vanity. "Madrid has six thousand, and there are over sixty thousand in"—

"That will do," said the consul, as a murmur of Wunderschön! went round the group of listening servant girls, while glances of admiration were shot at the beaming accused.

"But you ought to remember the name of the town where your naturalization papers were afterwards sent."

"But I was a citizen from the moment I made my declaration," said the stranger smiling, and looking triumphantly at his admirers, "and I could vote!"

The inspector, since he had come to grief over American geographical nomenclature, was grimly taciturn. The consul, however, was by no means certain of his victory. His alleged fellow citizen was too encyclopædic in his knowledge: a clever youth might have crammed for this with a textbook, but then he did not *look* at all clever; indeed, he had rather the stupidity of the mythological subject he represented. "Leave him with me," said the consul. The inspector handed him a *précis* of the case. The cherub's name was Karl Schwartz, an orphan, missing from Schlachtstadt since the age of twelve. Relations not living, or in emigration. Identity established by prisoner's admission and record.

"Now, Karl," said the consul cheerfully, as the door of his private office closed upon them, "what is your little game? Have you *ever* had any papers? And if you were

clever enough to study the map of New York State, why were n't you clever enough to see that it would n't stand you in place of your papers?"

"Dot 's joost it," said Karl in English; "but you see dot if I haf declairet mine intention of begomming a citizen, it 's all the same, don't it?"

"By no means, for you seem to have no evidence of the *declaration;* no papers at all."

"Zo!" said Karl. Nevertheless, he pushed his small, rosy, pickled-pig's-feet of fingers through his fleecy curls and beamed pleasantly at the consul. "Dot 's vot 's der matter," he said, as if taking a kindly interest in some private trouble of the consul's. "Dot 's vere you vos, eh?"

The consul looked steadily at him for a moment. Such stupidity was by no means phenomenal, nor at all inconsistent with his appearance. "And," continued the consul gravely, "I must tell you that, unless you have other proofs than you have shown, it will be my duty to give you up to the authorities."

"Dot means I shall serve my time, eh?" said Karl, with an unchanged smile.

"Exactly so," returned the consul.

"Zo!" said Karl. "Dese town — dese Schlachtstadt — is fine town, eh? Fine vomens. Goot men. Und beer und sausage. Blenty to eat and drink, eh? Und," looking around the room, "you and te poys haf a gay times."

"Yes," said the consul shortly, turning away. But he presently faced round again on the unfettered Karl, who was evidently indulging in a gormandizing reverie.

"What on earth brought you here, anyway?"

"Was it das?"

"What brought you here from America, or wherever you ran away from?"

"To see der volks."

"But you are an *orphan*, you know, and you have no folks living here."

"But all Shermany is mine volks, — de whole gountry, don't it? Pet your poots! How 's dot, eh?"

The consul turned back to his desk and wrote a short note to General Adlerkreutz in his own American German. He did not think it his duty in the present case to interfere with the authorities or to offer his parole for Karl Schwartz. But he would claim

that, as the offender was evidently an innocent emigrant and still young, any punishment or military degradation be omitted, and he be allowed to take his place like any other recruit in the ranks. If he might have the temerity to the undoubted, far-seeing military authority of suggestion making here, he would suggest that Karl was for the commissariat fitted! Of course, he still retained the right, on production of satisfactory proof, his discharge to claim.

The consul read this aloud to Karl. The cherubic youth smiled and said, "Zo!" Then, extending his hand, he added the word "Zshake!"

The consul shook his hand a little remorsefully, and, preceding him to the outer room, resigned him with the note into the inspector's hands. A universal sigh went up from the girls, and glances of appeal sought the consul; but he wisely concluded that it would be well, for a while, that Karl — a helpless orphan — should be under some sort of discipline! And the securer business of certifying invoices recommenced.

Late that afternoon he received a folded bit of blue paper from the waistbelt of an orderly, which contained in English charac-

ters and as a single word "Alright," followed by certain jagged pen-marks, which he recognized as Adlerkreutz's signature. But it was not until a week later that he learned anything definite. He was returning one night to his lodgings in the residential part of the city, and, in opening the door with his pass-key, perceived in the rear of the hall his handmaiden Trudschen, attended by the usual blue or yellow or red shadow. He was passing by them with the local *'n' Abend!* on his lips when the soldier turned his face and saluted. The consul stopped. It was the cherub Karl in uniform!

But it had not subdued a single one of his characteristics. His hair had been cropped a little more closely under his cap, but there was its color and woolliness still intact; his plump figure was girt by belt and buttons, but he only looked the more unreal, and more like a combination of pen-wiper and pincushion, until his puffy breast and shoulders seemed to offer a positive invitation to any one who had picked up a pin. But, wonderful! — according to his brief story — he had been so proficient in the goose step that he had been put in uniform

already, and allowed certain small privileges, — among them, evidently, the present one. The consul smiled and passed on. But it seemed strange to him that Trudschen, who was a tall strapping girl, exceedingly popular with the military, and who had never looked lower than a corporal at least, should accept the attentions of an Einjähriger like that. Later he interrogated her.

Ach! it was only Unser Karl! And the consul knew he was Amerikanisch!

"Indeed!"

"Yes! It was such a tearful story!"

"Tell me what it is," said the consul, with a faint hope that Karl had volunteered some communication of his past.

"Ach Gott! There in America he was a man, and could 'vote,' make laws, and, God willing, become a town councilor, — or Ober Intendant, — and here he was nothing but a soldier for years. And this America was a fine country. Wunderschön! There were such big cities, and one — 'Booflo' — could hold all Schlachtstadt, and had of people five hundred thousand!"

The consul sighed. Karl had evidently not yet got off the line of the New York Central and Erie roads. "But does he re-

member yet what he did with his papers?" said the consul persuasively.

"Ach! What does he want with *papers* when he could make the laws? They were dumb, stupid things — these papers — to him."

"But his appetite remains good, I hope?" suggested the consul.

This closed the conversation, although Karl came on many other nights, and his toy figure quite supplanted the tall corporal of hussars in the remote shadows of the hall. One night, however, the consul returned home from a visit to a neighboring town a day earlier than he was expected. As he neared his house he was a little surprised to find the windows of his sitting-room lit up, and that there were no signs of Trudschen in the lower hall or passages. He made his way upstairs in the dark and pushed open the door of his apartment. To his astonishment, Karl was sitting comfortably in his own chair, his cap off before a student-lamp on the table, deeply engaged in apparent study. So profound was his abstraction that it was a moment before he looked up, and the consul had a good look at his usually beaming and responsive face, which, how-

ever, now struck him as wearing a singular air of thought and concentration. When their eyes at last met, he rose instantly and saluted, and his beaming smile returned. But, either from his natural phlegm or extraordinary self-control, he betrayed neither embarrassment nor alarm.

The explanation he gave was direct and simple. Trudschen had gone out with the Corporal Fritz for a short walk, and had asked him to "keep house" during their absence. He had no books, no papers, nothing to read in the barracks, and no chance to improve his mind. He thought the Herr Consul would not object to his looking at his books. The consul was touched; it was really a trivial indiscretion, and as much Trudschen's fault as Karl's! And if the poor fellow had any mind to improve, — his recent attitude certainly suggested thought and reflection, — the consul were a brute to reprove him. He smiled pleasantly as Karl returned a stubby bit of pencil and some greasy memoranda to his breast pocket, and glanced at the table. But to his surprise it was a large map that Karl had been studying, and, to his still greater surprise, a map of the consul's own district.

"You seem to be fond of map-studying," said the consul pleasantly. "You are not thinking of emigrating again?"

"Ach, no!" said Karl simply; "it is my cousine vot haf lif near here. I find her."

But he left on Trudschen's return, and the consul was surprised to see that, while Karl's attitude towards her had not changed, the girl exhibited less effusiveness than before. Believing it to be partly the effect of the return of the corporal, the consul taxed her with faithlessness. But Trudschen looked grave.

"Ah! He has new friends, this Karl of ours. He cares no more for poor girls like us. When fine ladies like the old Frau von Wimpfel make much of him, what will you?"

It appeared, indeed, from Trudschen's account, that the widow of a wealthy shopkeeper had made a kind of protégé of the young soldier, and given him presents. Furthermore, that the wife of his colonel had employed him to act as page or attendant at an afternoon Gesellschaft, and that since then the wives of other officers had sought him. Did not the Herr Consul think it was dreadful that this American, who could vote

and make laws, should be subjected to such things?

The consul did not know what to think. It seemed to him, however, that Karl was "getting on," and that he was not in need of his assistance. It was in the expectation of hearing more about him, however, that he cheerfully accepted an invitation from Adlerkreutz to dine at the Caserne one evening with the staff. Here he found, somewhat to his embarrassment, that the dinner was partly in his own honor, and at the close of five courses, and the emptying of many bottles, his health was proposed by the gallant veteran Adlerkreutz in a neat address of many syllables containing all the parts of speech and a single verb. It was to the effect that in his soul-friend the Herr Consul and himself was the never-to-be-severed union of Germania and Columbia, and in their perfect understanding was the war-defying alliance of two great nations, and that in the consul's noble restoration of Unser Karl to the German army there was the astute diplomacy of a great mind. He was satisfied that himself and the Herr Consul still united in the great future, looking down upon a common brotherhood,—the great Germanic

American Confederation, — would feel satisfied with themselves and each other and their never-to-be-forgotten earth-labors. Cries of "Hoch! Hoch!" resounded through the apartment with the grinding roll of heavy-bottomed beer-glasses, and the consul, tremulous with emotion and a reserve verb in his pocket, rose to reply. Fully embarked upon this perilous voyage, and steering wide and clear of any treacherous shore of intelligence or fancied harbor of understanding and rest, he kept boldly out at sea. He said that, while his loving adversary in this battle of compliment had disarmed him and left him no words to reply to his generous panegyric, he could not but join with that gallant soldier in his heartfelt aspirations for the peaceful alliance of both countries. But while he fully reciprocated all his host's broader and higher sentiments, he must point out to this gallant assembly, this glorious brotherhood, that even a greater tie of sympathy knitted him to the general, — the tie of kinship! For while it was well known to the present company that their gallant commander had married an Englishwoman, he, the consul, although always an American, would now for the first time con-

fess to them that he *himself* was of Dutch descent on his mother's side! He would say no more, but confidently leave them in possession of the tremendous significance of this until-then-unknown fact! He sat down, with the forgotten verb still in his pocket, but the applause that followed this perfectly conclusive, satisfying, and logical climax convinced him of his success. His hand was grasped eagerly by successive warriors; the general turned and embraced him before the breathless assembly; there were tears in the consul's eyes.

As the festivities progressed, however, he found to his surprise that Karl had not only become the fashion as a military page, but that his naïve stupidity and sublime simplicity was the wondering theme and inexhaustible delight of the whole barracks. Stories were told of his genius for blundering which rivaled Handy Andy's; old stories of fatuous ignorance were rearranged and fitted to "our Karl." It was "our Karl" who, on receiving a tip of two marks from the hands of a young lady to whom he had brought the bouquet of a gallant lieutenant, exhibited some hesitation, and finally said, "Yes, but, gnädiges Fräulein, that *cost* us nine

marks!" It was "our Karl" who, interrupting the regrets of another lady that she was unable to accept his master's invitation, said politely, "Ah! what matter, Gnädigste? I have still a letter for Fräulein Kopp [her rival], and I was told that I must not invite you both." It was "our Karl" who astonished the hostess to whom he was sent at the last moment with apologies from an officer, unexpectedly detained at barrack duty, by suggesting that he should bring that unfortunate officer his dinner from the just served table. Nor were these charming infelicities confined to his social and domestic service. Although ready, mechanical, and invariably docile in the manual and physical duties of a soldier, — which endeared him to the German drill-master, — he was still invincibly ignorant as to its purport, or even the meaning and structure of the military instruments he handled or vacantly looked upon. It was "our Karl" who suggested to his instructors that in field-firing it was quicker and easier to load his musket to the muzzle at once, and get rid of its death-dealing contents at a single discharge, than to load and fire consecutively. It was "our Karl" who nearly killed the instructor at

sentry drill by adhering to the letter of his instructions when that instructor had forgotten the password. It was the same Karl who, severely admonished for his recklessness, the next time added to his challenge the precaution, "Unless you instantly say 'Fatherland' I 'll fire!" Yet his perfect good humor and childlike curiosity were unmistakable throughout, and incited his comrades and his superiors to show him everything in the hope of getting some characteristic comment from him. Everything and everybody were open to Karl and his good-humored simplicity.

That evening, as the general accompanied the consul down to the gateway and the waiting carriage, a figure in uniform ran spontaneously before them and shouted "Heraus!" to the sentries. But the general promptly checked "the turning out" of the guard with a paternal shake of his finger to the over-zealous soldier, in whom the consul recognized Karl. "He is my Bursche now," said the general explanatorily. "My wife has taken a fancy to him. Ach! he is very popular with these women." The consul was still more surprised. The Frau Generalin Adlerkreutz he knew to be a pro-

nounced Englishwoman, — carrying out her English ways, proprieties, and prejudices in the very heart of Schlachtstadt, uncompromisingly, without fear and without reproach. That she should follow a merely foreign society craze, or alter her English household so as to admit the impossible Karl, struck him oddly.

A month or two elapsed without further news of Karl, when one afternoon he suddenly turned up at the consulate. He had again sought the consular quiet to write a few letters home; he had no chance in the confinement of the barracks.

"But by this time you must be in the family of a field-marshal, at least," suggested the consul pleasantly.

"Not to-day, but next week," said Karl, with sublime simplicity; "*then* I am going to serve with the governor commandant of Rheinfestung."

The consul smiled, motioned him to a seat at a table in the outer office, and left him undisturbed to his correspondence.

Returning later, he found Karl, his letters finished, gazing with childish curiosity and admiration at some thick official envelopes, bearing the stamp of the consulate,

which were lying on the table. He was evidently struck with the contrast between them and the thin, flimsy affairs he was holding in his hand. He appeared still more impressed when the consul told him what they were.

"Are you writing to your friends?" continued the consul, touched by his simplicity.

"Ach ja!" said Karl eagerly.

"Would you like to put your letter in one of these envelopes?" continued the official.

The beaming face and eyes of Karl were a sufficient answer. After all, it was a small favor granted to this odd waif, who seemed to still cling to the consular protection. He handed him the envelope and left him addressing it in boyish pride.

It was Karl's last visit to the consulate. He appeared to have spoken truly, and the consul presently learned that he had indeed been transferred, through some high official manipulation, to the personal service of the governor of Rheinfestung. There was weeping among the Dienstmädchen of Schlachtstadt, and a distinct loss of originality and lightness in the gatherings of the gentler Hausfrauen. His memory still survived in the barracks through the later editions of

his former delightful stupidities, — many of them, it is to be feared, were inventions, — and stories that were supposed to have come from Rheinfestung were described in the slang of the Offiziere as being "colossal." But the consul remembered Rheinfestung, and could not imagine it as a home for Karl, or in any way fostering his peculiar qualities. For it was eminently a fortress of fortresses, a magazine of magazines, a dépôt of dépôts. It was the key of the Rhine, the citadel of Westphalia, the "Clapham Junction" of German railways, but defended, fortified, encompassed, and controlled by the newest as well as the oldest devices of military strategy and science. Even in the pipingest time of peace, whole railway trains went into it like a rat in a trap, and might have never come out of it; it stretched out an inviting hand and arm across the river that might in the twinkling of an eye be changed into a closed fist of menace. You "defiled" into it, commanded at every step by enfilading walls; you "debouched" out of it, as you thought, and found yourself only before the walls; you "reëntered" it at every possible angle; you did everything apparently but pass through it. You thought

yourself well out of it, and were stopped by a bastion. Its circumvallations haunted you until you came to the next station. It had pressed even the current of the river into its defensive service. There were secrets of its foundations and mines that only the highest military despots knew and kept to themselves. In a word — it was impregnable.

That such a place could not be trifled with or misunderstood in its right-and-acute-angled severities seemed plain to every one. But set on by his companions, who were showing him its defensive foundations, or in his own idle curiosity, Karl managed to fall into the Rhine and was fished out with difficulty. The immersion may have chilled his military ardor or soured his good humor, for later the consul heard that he had visited the American consular agent at an adjacent town with the old story of his American citizenship. "He seemed," said the consul's colleague, "to be well posted about American railways and American towns, but he had no papers. He lounged around the office for a while and" —

"Wrote letters home?" suggested the consul, with a flash of reminiscence.

"Yes, the poor chap had no privacy at the barracks, and I reckon was overlooked or bedeviled."

This was the last the consul heard of Karl Schwartz directly; for a week or two later he again fell into the Rhine, this time so fatally and effectually that in spite of the efforts of his companions he was swept away by the rapid current, and thus ended his service to his country. His body was never recovered.

A few months before the consul was transferred from Schlachtstadt to another post his memory of the departed Karl was revived by a visit from Adlerkreutz. The general looked grave.

"You remember Unser Karl?" he said.

"Yes."

"Do you think he was an impostor?"

"As regards his American citizenship, yes! But I could not say more."

"So!" said the general. "A very singular thing has happened," he added, twirling his mustache. "The inspector of police has notified us of the arrival of a Karl Schwartz in this town. It appears he is the *real* Karl Schwartz, identified by his sister as the only one. The other, who was drowned, was an impostor. Hein?"

"Then you have secured another recruit?" said the consul smilingly.

"No. For this one has already served his time in Elsass, where he went when he left here as a boy. But, Donnerwetter, why should that dumb fool take his name?"

"By chance, I fancy. Then he stupidly stuck to it, and had to take the responsibilities with it. Don't you see?" said the consul, pleased with his own cleverness.

"Zo-o!" said the general slowly, in his deepest voice. But the German exclamation has a variety of significance, according to the inflection, and Adlerkreutz's ejaculation seemed to contain them all.

. . . . . .

It was in Paris, where the consul had lingered on his way to his new post. He was sitting in a well-known café, among whose habitués were several military officers of high rank. A group of them were gathered round a table near him. He was idly watching them with an odd recollection of Schlachtstadt in his mind, and as idly glancing from them to the more attractive Boulevard without. The consul was getting a little tired of soldiers.

Suddenly there was a slight stir in the

gesticulating group and a cry of greeting. The consul looked up mechanically, and then his eyes remained fixed and staring at the newcomer. For it was the dead Karl; Karl, surely! Karl! — his plump figure belted in a French officer's tunic; his flaxen hair clipped a little closer, but still its fleece showing under his kepi. Karl, his cheeks more cherubic than ever — unchanged but for a tiny yellow toy mustache curling up over the corners of his full lips. Karl, beaming at his companions in his old way, but rattling off French vivacities without the faintest trace of accent. Could he be mistaken? Was it some phenomenal resemblance, or had the soul of the German private been transmigrated to the French officer.

The consul hurriedly called the *garçon*. "Who is that officer who has just arrived?"

"It is the Captain Christian, of the Intelligence Bureau," said the waiter, with proud alacrity. "A famous officer, brave as a rabbit, — un fier lapin, — and one of our best clients. So *drôle*, too, such a *farceur* and mimic. M'sieur would be ravished to hear his imitations."

"But he looks like a German; and his name!"

"Ah, he is from Alsace. But not a German!" said the waiter, absolutely whitening with indignation. "He was at Belfort. So was I. Mon Dieu! No, a thousand times no!"

"But has he been living here long?" said the consul.

"In Paris, a few months. But his Department, M'sieur understands, takes him *everywhere!* Everywhere where he can gain information."

The consul's eyes were still on the Captain Christian. Presently the officer, perhaps instinctively conscious of the scrutiny, looked towards him. Their eyes met. To the consul's surprise, the *ci-devant* Karl beamed upon him, and advanced with outstretched hand.

But the consul stiffened slightly, and remained so with his glass in his hand. At which Captain Christian brought his own easily to a military salute, and said politely: —

"Monsieur le Consul has been promoted from his post. Permit me to congratulate him."

"You have heard, then?" said the consul dryly.

"Otherwise I should not presume. For our Department makes it a business — in Monsieur le Consul's case it becomes a pleasure — to know everything."

"Did your Department know that the real Karl Schwartz has returned?" said the consul dryly.

Captain Christian shrugged his shoulders. "Then it appears that the sham Karl died none too soon," he said lightly. "And yet" — he bent his eyes with mischievous reproach upon the consul.

"Yet what?" demanded the consul sternly.

"Monsieur le Consul might have saved the unfortunate man by accepting him as an American citizen and not helping to force him into the German service."

The consul saw in a flash the full military significance of this logic, and could not repress a smile. At which Captain Christian dropped easily into a chair beside him, and as easily into broken German English: —

"Und," he went on, "dees town — dees Schlachtstadt is fine town, eh? Fine womens? Goot men? Und peer and sausage? Blenty to eat and trink, eh? Und you und te poys haf a gay times?"

The consul tried to recover his dignity.

The waiter behind him, recognizing only the delightful mimicry of this adorable officer, was in fits of laughter. Nevertheless, the consul managed to say dryly: —

"And the barracks, the magazines, the commissariat, the details, the reserves of Schlachtstadt were very interesting?"

"Assuredly."

"And Rheinfestung — its plans — its details, even its dangerous foundations by the river — they were to a soldier singularly instructive?"

"You have reason to say so," said Captain Christian, curling his little mustache.

"And the fortress — you think?"

"Imprenable! Mais" —

The consul remembered General Adlerkreutz's "Zo-o," and wondered.

UNCLE JIM AND UNCLE BILLY

THEY were partners. The avuncular title was bestowed on them by Cedar Camp, possibly in recognition of a certain matured good humor, quite distinct from the spasmodic exuberant spirits of its other members, and possibly from what, to its youthful sense, seemed their advanced ages — which must have been at least forty! They had also set habits even in their improvidence, lost incalculable and unpayable sums to each other over euchre regularly every evening, and inspected their sluice-boxes punctually every Saturday for repairs — which they never made. They even got to resemble each other, after the fashion of old married couples, or, rather, as in matrimonial partnerships, were subject to the domination of the stronger character; although in their case it is to be feared that it was the feminine Uncle Billy — enthusiastic, imaginative, and loquacious — who swayed the masculine, steady-going, and practical Un-

cle Jim. They had lived in the camp since its foundation in 1849; there seemed to be no reason why they should not remain there until its inevitable evolution into a mining-town. The younger members might leave through restless ambition or a desire for change or novelty; they were subject to no such trifling mutation. Yet Cedar Camp was surprised one day to hear that Uncle Billy was going away.

The rain was softly falling on the bark thatch of the cabin with a muffled murmur, like a sound heard through sleep. The southwest trades were warm even at that altitude, as the open door testified, although a fire of pine bark was flickering on the adobe hearth and striking out answering fires from the freshly scoured culinary utensils on the rude sideboard, which Uncle Jim had cleaned that morning with his usual serious persistency. Their best clothes, which were interchangeable and worn alternately by each other on festal occasions, hung on the walls, which were covered with a coarse sailcloth canvas instead of lath-and-plaster, and were diversified by pictures from illustrated papers and stains from the exterior weather. Two "bunks," like ships' berths,

— an upper and lower one, — occupied the gable-end of this single apartment, and on beds of coarse sacking, filled with dry moss, were carefully rolled their respective blankets and pillows. They were the only articles not used in common, and whose individuality was respected.

Uncle Jim, who had been sitting before the fire, rose as the square bulk of his partner appeared at the doorway with an armful of wood for the evening stove. By that sign he knew it was nine o'clock: for the last six years Uncle Billy had regularly brought in the wood at that hour, and Uncle Jim had as regularly closed the door after him, and set out their single table, containing a greasy pack of cards taken from its drawer, a bottle of whiskey, and two tin drinking-cups. To this was added a ragged memorandum-book and a stick of pencil. The two men drew their stools to the table.

"Hol' on a minit," said Uncle Billy.

His partner laid down the cards as Uncle Billy extracted from his pocket a pill-box, and, opening it, gravely took a pill. This was clearly an innovation on their regular proceedings, for Uncle Billy was always in perfect health.

"What 's this for?" asked Uncle Jim half scornfully.

"Agin ager."

"You ain't got no ager," said Uncle Jim, with the assurance of intimate cognizance of his partner's physical condition.

"But it 's a pow'ful preventive! Quinine! Saw this box at Riley's store, and laid out a quarter on it. We kin keep it here, comfortable, for evenings. It 's mighty soothin' arter a man 's done a hard day's work on the river-bar. Take one."

Uncle Jim gravely took a pill and swallowed it, and handed the box back to his partner.

"We 'll leave it on the table, sociable like, in case any of the boys come in," said Uncle Billy, taking up the cards. "Well. How do we stand?"

Uncle Jim consulted the memorandum-book. "You were owin' me sixty-two thousand dollars on the last game, and the limit 's seventy-five thousand!"

"Je whillikins!" ejaculated Uncle Billy. "Let me see."

He examined the book, feebly attempted to challenge the additions, but with no effect on the total. "We oughter hev made the

limit a hundred thousand," he said seriously; "seventy-five thousand is only triflin' in a game like ours. And you 've set down my claim at Angel's?" he continued.

"I allowed you ten thousand dollars for that," said Uncle Jim, with equal gravity, "and it 's a fancy price too."

The claim in question being an unprospected hillside ten miles distant, which Uncle Jim had never seen, and Uncle Billy had not visited for years, the statement was probably true; nevertheless, Uncle Billy retorted: —

"Ye kin never tell how these things will pan out. Why, only this mornin' I was taking a turn round Shot Up Hill, that ye know is just rotten with quartz and gold, and I could n't help thinkin' how much it was like my ole claim at Angel's. I must take a day off to go on there and strike a pick in it, if only for luck."

Suddenly he paused and said, "Strange, ain't it, you should speak of it to-night? Now I call that queer!"

He laid down his cards and gazed mysteriously at his companion. Uncle Jim knew perfectly that Uncle Billy had regularly once a week for many years declared his final

determination to go over to Angel's and prospect his claim, yet nevertheless he half responded to his partner's suggestion of mystery, and a look of fatuous wonder crept into his eyes. But he contented himself by saying cautiously, "You spoke of it first."

"That 's the more sing'lar," said Uncle Billy confidently. "And I 've been thinking about it, and kinder seeing myself thar all day. It 's mighty queer!" He got up and began to rummage among some torn and coverless books in the corner.

"Where 's that 'Dream Book' gone to?"

"The Carson boys borrowed it," replied Uncle Jim. "Anyhow, yours was n't no dream — only a kind o' vision, and the book don't take no stock in visions." Nevertheless, he watched his partner with some sympathy, and added, "That reminds me that I had a dream the other night of being in 'Frisco at a small hotel, with heaps o' money, and all the time being sort o' scared and bewildered over it."

"No?" queried his partner eagerly yet reproachfully. "You never let on anything about it to *me!* It 's mighty queer you havin' these strange feelin's, for I 've had 'em myself. And only to-night, comin' up

from the spring, I saw two crows hopping in the trail, and I says, 'If I see another, it 's luck, sure!' And you 'll think I 'm lyin', but when I went to the wood-pile just now there was the *third* one sittin' up on a log as plain as I see you. Tell 'e what folks ken laugh — but that 's just what Jim Filgee saw the night before he made the big strike!"

They were both smiling, yet with an underlying credulity and seriousness as singularly pathetic as it seemed incongruous to their years and intelligence. Small wonder, however, that in their occupation and environment — living daily in an atmosphere of hope, expectation, and chance, looking forward each morning to the blind stroke of a pick that might bring fortune — they should see signs in nature and hear mystic voices in the trackless woods that surrounded them. Still less strange that they were peculiarly susceptible to the more recognized diversions of chance, and were gamblers on the turning of a card who trusted to the revelation of a shovelful of upturned earth.

It was quite natural, therefore, that they should return from their abstract form of divination to the table and their cards. But they were scarcely seated before they heard

a crackling step in the brush outside, and the free latch of their door was lifted. A younger member of the camp entered. He uttered a peevish "Halloo!" which might have passed for a greeting, or might have been a slight protest at finding the door closed, drew the stool from which Uncle Jim had just risen before the fire, shook his wet clothes like a Newfoundland dog, and sat down. Yet he was by no means churlish nor coarse-looking, and this act was rather one of easy-going, selfish, youthful familiarity than of rudeness. The cabin of Uncles Billy and Jim was considered a public right or "common" of the camp. Conferences between individual miners were appointed there. "I 'll meet you at Uncle Billy's" was a common tryst. Added to this was a tacit claim upon the partners' arbitrative powers, or the equal right to request them to step outside if the interviews were of a private nature. Yet there was never any objection on the part of the partners, and to-night there was not a shadow of resentment of this intrusion in the patient, good-humored, tolerant eyes of Uncles Jim and Billy as they gazed at their guest. Perhaps there was a slight gleam of relief in Uncle

Jim's when he found that the guest was unaccompanied by any one, and that it was not a tryst. It would have been unpleasant for the two partners to have stayed out in the rain while their guests were exchanging private confidences in their cabin. While there might have been no limit to their good will, there might have been some to their capacity for exposure.

Uncle Jim drew a huge log from beside the hearth and sat on the driest end of it, while their guest occupied the stool. The young man, without turning away from his discontented, peevish brooding over the fire, vaguely reached backward for the whiskey-bottle and Uncle Billy's tin cup, to which he was assisted by the latter's hospitable hand. But on setting down the cup his eye caught sight of the pill-box.

"Wot 's that?" he said, with gloomy scorn. "Rat poison?"

"Quinine pills — agin ager," said Uncle Jim. "The newest thing out. Keeps out damp like Injin-rubber! Take one to follow yer whiskey. Me and Uncle Billy would n't think o' settin' down, quiet like, in the evening arter work, without 'em. Take one — ye 'r' welcome! We keep 'em out here for the boys."

Accustomed as the partners were to adopt and wear each other's opinions before folks, as they did each other's clothing, Uncle Billy was, nevertheless, astonished and delighted at Uncle Jim's enthusiasm over *his* pills. The guest took one and swallowed it.

"Mighty bitter!" he said, glancing at his hosts with the quick Californian suspicion of some practical joke. But the honest faces of the partners reassured him.

"That bitterness ye taste," said Uncle Jim quickly, "is whar the thing 's gittin' in its work. Sorter sickenin' the malaria — and kinder water-proofin' the insides all to onct and at the same lick! Don't yer see? Put another in yer vest pocket; you 'll be cryin' for 'em like a child afore ye get home. Thar! Well, how 's things agoin' on your claim, Dick? Boomin', eh?"

The guest raised his head and turned it sufficiently to fling his answer back over his shoulder at his hosts. "I don't know what *you* 'd call 'boomin',' " he said gloomily; "I suppose you two men sitting here comfortably by the fire, without caring whether school keeps or not, would call two feet of backwater over one's claim 'boomin';' I reckon *you* 'd consider a hundred and fifty

feet of sluicing carried away, and drifting to thunder down the South Fork, something in the way of advertising to your old camp! I suppose *you* 'd think it was an inducement to investors! I should n't wonder," he added still more gloomily, as a sudden dash of rain down the wide-throated chimney dropped in his tin cup — "and it would be just like you two chaps, sittin' there gormandizing over your quinine — if yer said this rain that 's lasted three weeks was something to be proud of!"

It was the cheerful and the satisfying custom of the rest of the camp, for no reason whatever, to hold Uncle Jim and Uncle Billy responsible for its present location, its vicissitudes, the weather, or any convulsion of nature; and it was equally the partners' habit, for no reason whatever, to accept these animadversions and apologize.

"It 's a rain that 's soft and mellowin'," said Uncle Billy gently, "and supplin' to the sinews and muscles. Did ye ever notice, Jim" — ostentatiously to his partner — "did ye ever notice that you get inter a kind o' sweaty lather workin' in it? Sorter openin' to the pores!"

"Fetches 'em every time," said Uncle Billy. "Better nor fancy soap."

Their guest laughed bitterly. "Well, I 'm going to leave it to you. I reckon to cut the whole concern to-morrow, and 'lite' out for something new. It can't be worse than this."

The two partners looked grieved, albeit they were accustomed to these outbursts. Everybody who thought of going away from Cedar Camp used it first as a threat to these patient men, after the fashion of runaway nephews, or made an exemplary scene of their going.

"Better think twice afore ye go," said Uncle Billy.

"I 've seen worse weather afore ye came," said Uncle Jim slowly. "Water all over the Bar; the mud so deep ye could n't get to Angel's for a sack o' flour, and we had to grub on pine nuts and jackass-rabbits. And yet — we stuck by the camp, and here we are!"

The mild answer apparently goaded their guest to fury. He rose from his seat, threw back his long dripping hair from his handsome but querulous face, and scattered a few drops on the partners. "Yes, that 's just it. That 's what gets me! Here you stick, and here you are! And here you 'll

stick and rust until you starve or drown! Here you are, — two men who ought to be out in the world, playing your part as grown men, — stuck here like children 'playing house' in the woods; playing work in your wretched mud-pie ditches, and content. Two men not so old that you might n't be taking your part in the fun of the world, going to balls or theatres, or paying attention to girls, and yet old enough to have married and have your families around you, content to stay in this God-forsaken place; old bachelors, pigging together like poor-house paupers. That 's what gets me! Say you *like* it? Say you expect by hanging on to make a strike — and what does that amount to? What are *your* chances? How many of us have made, or are making, more than grub wages? Say you 're willing to share and share alike as you do — have you got enough for two? Are n't you actually living off each other? Are n't you grinding each other down, choking each other's struggles, as you sink together deeper and deeper in the mud of this cussed camp? And while you 're doing this, are n't you, by your age and position here, holding out hopes to others that you know cannot be fulfilled?"

Accustomed as they were to the half-querulous, half-humorous, but always extravagant, criticism of the others, there was something so new in this arraignment of themselves that the partners for a moment sat silent. There was a slight flush on Uncle Billy's cheek, there was a slight paleness on Uncle Jim's. He was the first to reply. But he did so with a certain dignity which neither his partner nor their guest had ever seen on his face before.

"As it 's *our* fire that 's warmed ye up like this, Dick Bullen," he said, slowly rising, with his hand resting on Uncle Billy's shoulder, "and as it 's *our* whiskey that 's loosened your tongue, I reckon we must put up with what ye 'r' saying, just as we 've managed to put up with our own way o' living, and not quo'll with ye under our own roof."

The young fellow saw the change in Uncle Jim's face and quickly extended his hand, with an apologetic backward shake of his long hair. "Hang it all, old man," he said, with a laugh of mingled contrition and amusement, "you must n't mind what I said just now. I 've been so worried thinking of things about *myself*, and, maybe, a little

about you, that I quite forgot I had n't a call to preach to anybody — least of all to you. So we part friends, Uncle Jim, and you too, Uncle Billy, and you 'll forget what I said. In fact, I don't know why I spoke at all — only I was passing your claim just now, and wondering how much longer your old sluice-boxes would hold out, and where in thunder you 'd get others when they caved in! I reckon that sent me off. That 's all, old chap!"

Uncle Billy's face broke into a beaming smile of relief, and it was *his* hand that first grasped his guest's; Uncle Jim quickly followed with as honest a pressure, but with eyes that did not seem to be looking at Bullen, though all trace of resentment had died out of them. He walked to the door with him, again shook hands, but remained looking out in the darkness some time after Dick Bullen's tangled hair and broad shoulders had disappeared.

Meantime, Uncle Billy had resumed his seat and was chuckling and reminiscent as he cleaned out his pipe.

"Kinder reminds me of Jo Sharp, when he was cleaned out at poker by his own partners in his own cabin, comin' up here

and bedevilin' *us* about it! What was it you lint him?"

But Uncle Jim did not reply; and Uncle Billy, taking up the cards, began to shuffle them, smiling vaguely, yet at the same time somewhat painfully. "Arter all, Dick was mighty cut up about what he said, and I felt kinder sorry for him. And, you know, I rather cotton to a man that speaks his mind. Sorter clears him out, you know, of all the slumgullion that 's in him. It 's just like washin' out a pan o' prospecting: you pour in the water, and keep slushing it round and round, and out comes first the mud and dirt, and then the gravel, and then the black sand, and then — it 's all out, and there 's a speck o' gold glistenin' at the bottom!"

"Then you think there *was* suthin' in what he said?" said Uncle Jim, facing about slowly.

An odd tone in his voice made Uncle Billy look up. "No," he said quickly, shying with the instinct of an easy pleasure-loving nature from a possible grave situation. "No, I don't think he ever got the color! But wot are ye moonin' about for? Ain't ye goin' to play? It 's mor' 'n half past nine now."

Thus adjured, Uncle Jim moved up to the table and sat down, while Uncle Billy dealt the cards, turning up the Jack or right bower — but *without* that exclamation of delight which always accompanied his good fortune, nor did Uncle Jim respond with the usual corresponding simulation of deep disgust. Such a circumstance had not occurred before in the history of their partnership. They both played in silence — a silence only interrupted by a larger splash of raindrops down the chimney.

"We orter put a couple of stones on the chimney-top, edgewise, like Jack Curtis does. It keeps out the rain without interferin' with the draft," said Uncle Billy musingly.

"What 's the use if" —

"If what?" said Uncle Billy quietly.

"If we don't make it broader," said Uncle Jim half wearily.

They both stared at the chimney, but Uncle Jim's eye followed the wall around to the bunks. There were many discolorations on the canvas, and a picture of the Goddess of Liberty from an illustrated paper had broken out in a kind of damp, measly eruption. "I 'll stick that funny handbill of the

'Washin' Soda' I got at the grocery store the other day right over the Liberty gal. It 's a mighty perty woman washin' with short sleeves," said Uncle Billy. "That 's the comfort of them picters, you kin always get somethin' new, and it adds thickness to the wall."

Uncle Jim went back to the cards in silence. After a moment he rose again, and hung his overcoat against the door.

"Wind 's comin' in," he said briefly.

"Yes," said Uncle Billy cheerfully, "but it would n't seem nat'ral if there was n't that crack in the door to let the sunlight in o' mornin's. Makes a kind o' sundial, you know. When the streak o' light 's in that corner, I says 'six o'clock!' when it 's across the chimney I say 'seven!' and so 't is!"

It certainly had grown chilly, and the wind was rising. The candle guttered and flickered; the embers on the hearth brightened occasionally, as if trying to dispel the gathering shadows, but always ineffectually. The game was frequently interrupted by the necessity of stirring the fire. After an interval of gloom, in which each partner successively drew the candle to his side to examine his cards, Uncle Jim said: —

"Say?"

"Well!" responded Uncle Billy.

"Are you sure you saw that third crow on the wood-pile?"

"Sure as I see you now — and a darned sight plainer. Why?"

"Nothin', I was just thinkin'. Look here! How do we stand now?"

Uncle Billy was still losing. "Nevertheless," he said cheerfully, "I 'm owin' you a matter of sixty thousand dollars."

Uncle Jim examined the book abstractedly. "Suppose," he said slowly, but without looking at his partner, "suppose, as it 's gettin' late now, we play for my half share of the claim agin the limit — seventy thousand — to square up."

"Your half share!" repeated Uncle Billy, with amused incredulity.

"My half share of the claim, — of this yer house, you know, — one half of all that Dick Bullen calls our rotten starvation property," reiterated Uncle Jim, with a half smile.

Uncle Billy laughed. It was a novel idea; it was, of course, "all in the air," like the rest of their game, yet even then he had an odd feeling that he would have liked Dick Bullen to have known it. "Wade in, old pard," he said. "I 'm on it."

Uncle Jim lit another candle to reinforce the fading light, and the deal fell to Uncle Billy. He turned up Jack of clubs. He also turned a little redder as he took up his cards, looked at them, and glanced hastily at his partner. "It 's no use playing," he said. "Look here!" He laid down his cards on the table. They were the ace, king and queen of clubs, and Jack of spades, — or left bower, — which, with the turned-up Jack of clubs, — or right bower, — comprised *all* the winning cards!

"By jingo! If we 'd been playin' four-handed, say you an' me agin some other ducks, we 'd have made ' four ' in that deal, and h'isted some money — eh?" and his eyes sparkled. Uncle Jim, also, had a slight tremulous light in his own.

"Oh no! I didn't see no three crows this afternoon," added Uncle Billy gleefully, as his partner, in turn, began to shuffle the cards with laborious and conscientious exactitude. Then dealing, he turned up a heart for trumps. Uncle Billy took up his cards one by one, but when he had finished his face had become as pale as it had been red before. "What 's the matter?" said Uncle Jim quickly, his own face growing white.

Uncle Billy slowly and with breathless awe laid down his cards, face up on the table. It was exactly the same sequence *in hearts*, with the knave of diamonds added. He could again take every trick.

They stared at each other with vacant faces and a half-drawn smile of fear. They could hear the wind moaning in the trees beyond; there was a sudden rattling at the door. Uncle Billy started to his feet, but Uncle Jim caught his arm. "*Don't leave the cards!* It 's only the wind; sit down," he said in a low awe-hushed voice, "it 's your deal; you were two before, and two now, that makes your four; you 've only one point to make to win the game. Go on."

They both poured out a cup of whiskey, smiling vaguely, yet with a certain terror in their eyes. Their hands were cold; the cards slipped from Uncle Billy's benumbed fingers; when he had shuffled them he passed them to his partner to shuffle them also, but did not speak. When Uncle Jim had shuffled them methodically he handed them back fatefully to his partner. Uncle Billy dealt them with a trembling hand. He turned up a club. "If you are sure of these tricks

you know you 've won," said Uncle Jim in a voice that was scarcely audible. Uncle Billy did not reply, but tremulously laid down the ace and right and left bowers.

He had won!

A feeling of relief came over each, and they laughed hysterically and discordantly. Ridiculous and childish as their contest might have seemed to a looker-on, to each the tension had been as great as that of the greatest gambler, without the gambler's trained restraint, coolness, and composure. Uncle Billy nervously took up the cards again.

"Don't," said Uncle Jim gravely; "it 's no use — the luck 's gone now."

"Just one more deal," pleaded his partner.

Uncle Jim looked at the fire, Uncle Billy hastily dealt, and threw the two hands face up on the table. They were the ordinary average cards. He dealt again, with the same result. "I told you so," said Uncle Jim, without looking up.

It certainly seemed a tame performance after their wonderful hands, and after another trial Uncle Billy threw the cards aside and drew his stool before the fire. "Mighty

queer, warn't it?" he said, with reminiscent awe. "Three times running. Do you know, I felt a kind o' creepy feelin' down my back all the time. Criky! what luck! None of the boys would believe it if we told 'em — least of all that Dick Bullen, who don't believe in luck, anyway. Wonder what he 'd have said! and, Lord! how he 'd have looked! Wall! what are you starin' so for?"

Uncle Jim had faced around, and was gazing at Uncle Billy's good-humored, simple face. "Nothin'!" he said briefly, and his eyes again sought the fire.

"Then don't look as if you was seein' suthin' — you give me the creeps," returned Uncle Billy a little petulantly. "Let 's turn in, afore the fire goes out!"

The fateful cards were put back into the drawer, the table shoved against the wall. The operation of undressing was quickly got over, the clothes they wore being put on top of their blankets. Uncle Billy yawned, "I wonder what kind of a dream I 'll have to-night — it oughter be suthin' to explain that luck." This was his "good-night" to his partner. In a few moments he was sound asleep.

Not so Uncle Jim. He heard the wind gradually go down, and in the oppressive silence that followed could detect the deep breathing of his companion and the far-off yelp of a coyote. His eyesight becoming accustomed to the semi-darkness, broken only by the scintillation of the dying embers of their fire, he could take in every detail of their sordid cabin and the rude environment in which they had lived so long. The dismal patches on the bark roof, the wretched makeshifts of each day, the dreary prolongation of discomfort, were all plain to him now, without the sanguine hope that had made them bearable. And when he shut his eyes upon them, it was only to travel in fancy down the steep mountain side that he had trodden so often to the dreary claim on the overflowed river, to the heaps of "tailings" that encumbered it, like empty shells of the hollow, profitless days spent there, which they were always waiting for the stroke of good fortune to clear away. He saw again the rotten "sluicing," through whose hopeless rifts and holes even their scant daily earnings had become scantier. At last he arose, and with infinite gentleness let himself down from his berth without disturbing

his sleeping partner, and wrapping himself in his blanket, went to the door, which he noiselessly opened. From the position of a few stars that were glittering in the northern sky he knew that it was yet scarcely midnight; there were still long, restless hours before the day! In the feverish state into which he had gradually worked himself it seemed to him impossible to wait the coming of the dawn.

But he was mistaken. For even as he stood there all nature seemed to invade his humble cabin with its free and fragrant breath, and invest him with its great companionship. He felt again, in that breath, that strange sense of freedom, that mystic touch of partnership with the birds and beasts, the shrubs and trees, in this greater home before him. It was this vague communion that had kept him there, that still held these world-sick, weary workers in their rude cabins on the slopes around him; and he felt upon his brow that balm that had nightly lulled him and them to sleep and forgetfulness. He closed the door, turned away, crept as noiselessly as before into his bunk again, and presently fell into a profound slumber.

But when Uncle Billy awoke the next morning he saw it was late; for the sun, piercing the crack of the closed door, was sending a pencil of light across the cold hearth, like a match to rekindle its dead embers. His first thought was of his strange luck the night before, and of disappointment that he had not had the dream of divination that he had looked for. He sprang to the floor, but as he stood upright his glance fell on Uncle Jim's bunk. It was empty. Not only that, but his *blankets* — Uncle Jim's own particular blankets — *were gone!*

A sudden revelation of his partner's manner the night before struck him now with the cruelty of a blow; a sudden intelligence, perhaps the very divination he had sought, flashed upon him like lightning! He glanced wildly around the cabin. The table was drawn out from the wall a little ostentatiously, as if to catch his eye. On it was lying the stained chamois-skin purse in which they had kept the few grains of gold remaining from their last week's "clean up." The grains had been carefully divided, and half had been taken! But near it lay the little memorandum-book, open, with the stick of pencil lying across it. A

deep line was drawn across the page on which was recorded their imaginary extravagant gains and losses, even to the entry of Uncle Jim's half share of the claim which he had risked and lost! Underneath were hurriedly scrawled the words: —

"Settled by *your* luck, last night, old pard. — JAMES FOSTER."

It was nearly a month before Cedar Camp was convinced that Uncle Billy and Uncle Jim had dissolved partnership. Pride had prevented Uncle Billy from revealing his suspicions of the truth, or of relating the events that preceded Uncle Jim's clandestine flight, and Dick Bullen had gone to Sacramento by stage-coach the same morning. He briefly gave out that his partner had been called to San Francisco on important business of their own, that indeed might necessitate his own removal there later. In this he was singularly assisted by a letter from the absent Jim, dated at San Francisco, begging him not to be anxious about his success, as he had hopes of presently entering into a profitable business, but with no further allusions to his precipitate departure, nor any suggestion of a reason for it.

For two or three days Uncle Billy was staggered and bewildered; in his profound simplicity he wondered if his extraordinary good fortune that night had made him deaf to some explanation of his partner's, or, more terrible, if he had shown some "low" and incredible intimation of taking his partner's extravagant bet as *real* and binding. In this distress he wrote to Uncle Jim an appealing and apologetic letter, albeit somewhat incoherent and inaccurate, and bristling with misspelling, camp slang, and old partnership jibes. But to this elaborate epistle he received only Uncle Jim's repeated assurances of his own bright prospects, and his hopes that his old partner would be more fortunate, single-handed, on the old claim. For a whole week or two Uncle Billy sulked, but his invincible optimism and good humor got the better of him, and he thought only of his old partner's good fortune. He wrote him regularly, but always to one address — a box at the San Francisco post-office, which to the simple-minded Uncle Billy suggested a certain official importance. To these letters Uncle Jim responded regularly but briefly.

From a certain intuitive pride in his part-

ner and his affection, Uncle Billy did not show these letters openly to the camp, although he spoke freely of his former partner's promising future, and even read them short extracts. It is needless to say that the camp did not accept Uncle Billy's story with unsuspecting confidence. On the contrary, a hundred surmises, humorous or serious, but always extravagant, were afloat in Cedar Camp. The partners had quarreled over their clothes — Uncle Jim, who was taller than Uncle Billy, had refused to wear his partner's trousers. They had quarreled over cards — Uncle Jim had discovered that Uncle Billy was in possession of a "cold deck," or marked pack. They had quarreled over Uncle Billy's carelessness in grinding up half a box of "bilious pills" in the morning's coffee. A gloomily imaginative mule-driver had darkly suggested that, as no one had really seen Uncle Jim leave the camp, he was still there, and his bones would yet be found in one of the ditches; while a still more credulous miner averred that what he had thought was the cry of a screech-owl the night previous to Uncle Jim's disappearance, might have been the agonized utterance of that murdered man.

It was highly characteristic of that camp — and, indeed, of others in California — that nobody, not even the ingenious theorists themselves, believed their story, and that no one took the slightest pains to verify or disprove it. Happily, Uncle Billy never knew it, and moved all unconsciously in this atmosphere of burlesque suspicion. And then a singular change took place in the attitude of the camp towards him and the disrupted partnership. Hitherto, for no reason whatever, all had agreed to put the blame upon Billy — possibly because he was present to receive it. As days passed that slight reticence and dejection in his manner, which they had at first attributed to remorse and a guilty conscience, now began to tell as absurdly in his favor. Here was poor Uncle Billy toiling through the ditches, while his selfish partner was lolling in the lap of luxury in San Francisco! Uncle Billy's glowing accounts of Uncle Jim's success only contributed to the sympathy now fully given in his behalf and their execration of the absconding partner. It was proposed at Biggs's store that a letter expressing the indignation of the camp over his heartless conduct to his late partner, William Fall,

should be forwarded to him. Condolences were offered to Uncle Billy, and uncouth attempts were made to cheer his loneliness. A procession of half a dozen men twice a week to his cabin, carrying their own whiskey and winding up with a "stag dance" before the premises, was sufficient to lighten his eclipsed gayety and remind him of a happier past. "Surprise" working parties visited his claim with spasmodic essays towards helping him, and great good humor and hilarity prevailed. It was not an unusual thing for an honest miner to arise from an idle gathering in some cabin and excuse himself with the remark that he "reckoned he 'd put in an hour's work in Uncle Billy's tailings!" And yet, as before, it was very improbable if any of these reckless benefactors *really* believed in their own earnestness or in the gravity of the situation. Indeed, a kind of hopeful cynicism ran through their performances. "Like as not, Uncle Billy is still in 'cahoots' [*i. e.*, shares] with his old pard, and is just laughin' at us as he 's sendin' him accounts of our tomfoolin'."

And so the winter passed and the rains, and the days of cloudless skies and chill starlit nights began. There were still fresh-

ets from the snow reservoirs piled high in the Sierran passes, and the Bar was flooded, but that passed too, and only the sunshine remained. Monotonous as the seasons were, there was a faint movement in the camp with the stirring of the sap in the pines and cedars. And then, one day, there was a strange excitement on the Bar. Men were seen running hither and thither, but mainly gathering in a crowd on Uncle Billy's claim, that still retained the old partners' names in "The Fall and Foster." To add to the excitement, there was the quickly repeated report of a revolver, to all appearance aimlessly exploded in the air by some one on the outskirts of the assemblage. As the crowd opened, Uncle Billy appeared, pale, hysterical, breathless, and staggering a little under the back-slapping and hand-shaking of the whole camp. For Uncle Billy had "struck it rich" — had just discovered a "pocket," roughly estimated to be worth fifteen thousand dollars!

Although in that supreme moment he missed the face of his old partner, he could not help seeing the unaffected delight and happiness shining in the eyes of all who surrounded him. It was characteristic of

that sanguine but uncertain life that success and good fortune brought no jealousy nor envy to the unfortunate, but was rather a promise and prophecy of the fulfillment of their own hopes. The gold was there — Nature but yielded up her secret. There was no prescribed limit to her bounty. So strong was this conviction that a long-suffering but still hopeful miner, in the enthusiasm of the moment, stooped down and patted a large boulder with the apostrophic "Good old gal!"

Then followed a night of jubilee, a next morning of hurried consultation with a mining expert and speculator lured to the camp by the good tidings; and then the very next night — to the utter astonishment of Cedar Camp — Uncle Billy, with a draft for twenty thousand dollars in his pocket, started for San Francisco, and took leave of his claim and the camp forever!

. . . . . .

When Uncle Billy landed at the wharves of San Francisco he was a little bewildered. The Golden Gate beyond was obliterated by the incoming sea-fog, which had also roofed in the whole city, and lights already glittered along the gray streets that climbed the

grayer sand-hills. As a Western man, brought up by inland rivers, he was fascinated and thrilled by the tall-masted seagoing ships, and he felt a strange sense of the remoter mysterious ocean, which he had never seen. But he was impressed and startled by smartly dressed men and women, the passing of carriages, and a sudden conviction that he was strange and foreign to what he saw. It had been his cherished intention to call upon his old partner in his working clothes, and then clap down on the table before him a draft for ten thousand dollars as *his* share of their old claim. But in the face of these brilliant strangers a sudden and unexpected timidity came upon him. He had heard of a cheap popular hotel, much frequented by the returning gold-miner, who entered its hospitable doors — which held an easy access to shops — and emerged in a few hours a gorgeous butterfly of fashion, leaving his old chrysalis behind him. Thence he inquired his way; hence he afterwards issued in garments glaringly new and ill fitting. But he had not sacrificed his beard, and there was still something fine and original in his handsome weak face that overcame the cheap convention of his

clothes. Making his way to the post-office, he was again discomfited by the great size of the building, and bewildered by the array of little square letter-boxes behind glass which occupied one whole wall, and an equal number of opaque and locked wooden ones legibly numbered. His heart leaped; he remembered the number, and before him was a window with a clerk behind it. Uncle Billy leaned forward.

"Kin you tell me if the man that box 690 b'longs to is in?"

The clerk stared, made him repeat the question, and then turned away. But he returned almost instantly, with two or three grinning heads besides his own, apparently set behind his shoulders. Uncle Billy was again asked to repeat his question. He did so.

"Why don't you go and see if 690 is in his box?" said the first clerk, turning with affected asperity to one of the others.

The clerk went away, returned, and said with singular gravity, "He was there a moment ago, but he 's gone out to stretch his legs. It 's rather crampin' at first; and he can't stand it more than ten hours at a time, you know."

But simplicity has its limits. Uncle Billy had already guessed his real error in believing his partner was officially connected with the building; his cheek had flushed and then paled again. The pupils of his blue eyes had contracted into suggestive black points. "Ef you 'll let me in at that winder, young fellers," he said, with equal gravity, "I 'll show yer how I kin make *you* small enough to go in a box without crampin'! But I only wanted to know where Jim Foster *lived*."

At which the first clerk became perfunctory again, but civil. "A letter left in his box would get you that information," he said, "and here 's paper and pencil to write it now."

Uncle Billy took the paper and began to write, "Just got here. Come and see me at" — He paused. A brilliant idea had struck him; he could impress both his old partner and the upstarts at the window; he would put in the name of the latest "swell" hotel in San Francisco, said to be a fairy dream of opulence. He added "The Oriental," and without folding the paper shoved it in the window.

"Don't you want an envelope?" asked the clerk.

"Put a stamp on the corner of it," responded Uncle Billy, laying down a coin, "and she 'll go through." The clerk smiled, but affixed the stamp, and Uncle Billy turned away.

But it was a short-lived triumph. The disappointment at finding Uncle Jim's address conveyed no idea of his habitation seemed to remove him farther away, and lose his identity in the great city. Besides, he must now make good his own address, and seek rooms at the Oriental. He went thither. The furniture and decorations, even in these early days of hotel-building in San Francisco, were extravagant and overstrained, and Uncle Billy felt lost and lonely in his strange surroundings. But he took a handsome suite of rooms, paid for them in advance on the spot, and then, half frightened, walked out of them to ramble vaguely through the city in the feverish hope of meeting his old partner. At night his inquietude increased; he could not face the long row of tables in the pillared dining-room, filled with smartly dressed men and women; he evaded his bedroom, with its brocaded satin chairs and its gilt bedstead, and fled to his modest lodgings at the Good Cheer House, and ap-

peased his hunger at its cheap restaurant, in the company of retired miners and freshly arrived Eastern emigrants. Two or three days passed thus in this quaint double existence. Three or four times a day he would enter the gorgeous Oriental with affected ease and carelessness, demand his key from the hotel-clerk, ask for the letter that did not come, go to his room, gaze vaguely from his window on the passing crowd below for the partner he could not find, and then return to the Good Cheer House for rest and sustenance. On the fourth day he received a short note from Uncle Jim; it was couched in his usual sanguine but brief and business-like style. He was very sorry, but important and profitable business took him out of town, but he trusted to return soon and welcome his old partner. He was also, for the first time, jocose, and hoped that Uncle Billy would not "see all the sights" before he, Uncle Jim, returned. Disappointing as this procrastination was to Uncle Billy, a gleam of hope irradiated it: the letter had bridged over that gulf which seemed to yawn between them at the post-office. His old partner had accepted his visit to San Francisco without question, and had alluded to a renewal

of their old intimacy. For Uncle Billy, with all his trustful simplicity, had been tortured by two harrowing doubts: one, whether Uncle Jim in his new-fledged smartness as a "city" man — such as he saw in the streets — would care for his rough companionship; the other, whether he, Uncle Billy, ought not to tell him at once of his changed fortune. But, like all weak, unreasoning men, he clung desperately to a detail — he could not forego his old idea of astounding Uncle Jim by giving him his share of the "strike" as his first intimation of it, and he doubted, with more reason perhaps, if Jim would see him after he had heard of his good fortune. For Uncle Billy had still a frightened recollection of Uncle Jim's sudden stroke for independence, and that rigid punctiliousness which had made him doggedly accept the responsibility of his extravagant stake at euchre.

With a view of educating himself for Uncle Jim's company, he "saw the sights" of San Francisco — as an overgrown and somewhat stupid child might have seen them — with great curiosity, but little contamination or corruption. But I think he was chiefly pleased with watching the arrival of

the Sacramento and Stockton steamers at the wharves, in the hope of discovering his old partner among the passengers on the gang-plank. Here, with his old superstitious tendency and gambler's instinct, he would augur great success in his search that day if any one of the passengers bore the least resemblance to Uncle Jim, if a man or woman stepped off first, or if he met a single person's questioning eye. Indeed, this got to be the real occupation of the day, which he would on no account have omitted, and to a certain extent revived each day in his mind the morning's work of their old partnership. He would say to himself, "It 's time to go and look up Jim," and put off what he was pleased to think were his pleasures until this act of duty was accomplished.

In this singleness of purpose he made very few and no entangling acquaintances, nor did he impart to any one the secret of his fortune, loyally reserving it for his partner's first knowledge. To a man of his natural frankness and simplicity this was a great trial, and was, perhaps, a crucial test of his devotion. When he gave up his rooms at the Oriental — as not necessary after his partner's absence — he sent a letter, with

his humble address, to the mysterious lock-box of his partner without fear or false shame. He would explain it all when they met. But he sometimes treated unlucky and returning miners to a dinner and a visit to the gallery of some theatre. Yet while he had an active sympathy with and understanding of the humblest, Uncle Billy, who for many years had done his own and his partner's washing, scrubbing, mending, and cooking, and saw no degradation in it, was somewhat inconsistently irritated by menial functions in men, and although he gave extravagantly to waiters, and threw a dollar to the crossing-sweeper, there was always a certain shy avoidance of them in his manner. Coming from the theatre one night Uncle Billy was, however, seriously concerned by one of these crossing-sweepers turning hastily before them and being knocked down by a passing carriage. The man rose and limped hurriedly away; but Uncle Billy was amazed and still more irritated to hear from his companion that this kind of menial occupation was often profitable, and that at some of the principal crossings the sweepers were already rich men.

But a few days later brought a more not-

able event to Uncle Billy. One afternoon in Montgomery Street he recognized in one of its smartly dressed frequenters a man who had a few years before been a member of Cedar Camp. Uncle Billy's childish delight at this meeting, which seemed to bridge over his old partner's absence, was, however, only half responded to by the ex-miner, and then somewhat satirically. In the fullness of his emotion, Uncle Billy confided to him that he was seeking his old partner, Jim Foster, and, reticent of his own good fortune, spoke glowingly of his partner's brilliant expectations, but deplored his inability to find him. And just now he was away on important business. "I reckon he 's got back," said the man dryly. "I did n't know he had a lock-box at the post-office, but I can give you his other address. He lives at the Presidio, at Washerwoman's Bay." He stopped and looked with a satirical smile at Uncle Billy. But the latter, familiar with Californian mining-camp nomenclature, saw nothing strange in it, and merely repeated his companion's words.

"You 'll find him there! Good-by! So long! Sorry I 'm in a hurry," said the ex-miner, and hurried away.

Uncle Billy was too delighted with the prospect of a speedy meeting with Uncle Jim to resent his former associate's supercilious haste, or even to wonder why Uncle Jim had not informed him that he had returned. It was not the first time that he had felt how wide was the gulf between himself and these others, and the thought drew him closer to his old partner, as well as his old idea, as it was now possible to surprise him with the draft. But as he was going to surprise him in his own boarding-house — probably a handsome one — Uncle Billy reflected that he would do so in a certain style.

He accordingly went to a livery stable and ordered a landau and pair, with a negro coachman. Seated in it, in his best and most ill-fitting clothes, he asked the coachman to take him to the Presidio, and leaned back in the cushions as they drove through the streets with such an expression of beaming gratification on his good-humored face that the passers-by smiled at the equipage and its extravagant occupant. To them it seemed the not unusual sight of the successful miner "on a spree." To the unsophisticated Uncle Billy their smiling seemed only a natural and kindly recognition of his hap-

piness, and he nodded and smiled back to them with unsuspecting candor and innocent playfulness. "These yer 'Frisco fellers ain't *all* slouches, you bet," he added to himself half aloud, at the back of the grinning coachman.

Their way led through well-built streets to the outskirts, or rather to that portion of the city which seemed to have been overwhelmed by shifting sand-dunes, from which half-submerged fences and even low houses barely marked the line of highway. The resistless trade-winds which had marked this change blew keenly in his face and slightly chilled his ardor. At a turn in the road the sea came in sight, and sloping towards it the great Cemetery of Lone Mountain, with white shafts and marbles that glittered in the sunlight like the sails of ships waiting to be launched down that slope into the Eternal Ocean. Uncle Billy shuddered. What if it had been his fate to seek Uncle Jim there!

"Dar's yar Presidio!" said the negro coachman a few moments later, pointing with his whip, "and dar's yar Wash'woman's Bay!"

Uncle Billy stared. A huge quadrangu-

lar fort of stone with a flag flying above its battlements stood at a little distance, pressed against the rocks, as if beating back the encroaching surges; between him and the fort but farther inland was a lagoon with a number of dilapidated, rudely patched cabins or cottages, like stranded driftwood around its shore. But there was no mansion, no block of houses, no street, not another habitation or dwelling to be seen!

Uncle Billy's first shock of astonishment was succeeded by a feeling of relief. He had secretly dreaded a meeting with his old partner in the "haunts of fashion;" whatever was the cause that made Uncle Jim seek this obscure retirement affected him but slightly; he even was thrilled with a vague memory of the old shiftless camp they had both abandoned. A certain instinct — he knew not why, or less still that it might be one of delicacy — made him alight before they reached the first house. Bidding the carriage wait, Uncle Billy entered, and was informed by a blowzy Irish laundress at a tub that Jim Foster, or "Arkansaw Jim," lived at the fourth shanty "beyant." He was at home, for "he 'd shprained his fut." Uncle Billy hurried

on, stopped before the door of a shanty scarcely less rude than their old cabin, and half timidly pushed it open. A growling voice from within, a figure that rose hurriedly, leaning on a stick, with an attempt to fly, but in the same moment sank back in a chair with an hysterical laugh — and Uncle Billy stood in the presence of his old partner! But as Uncle Billy darted forward, Uncle Jim rose again, and this time with outstretched hands. Uncle Billy caught them, and in one supreme pressure seemed to pour out and transfuse his whole simple soul into his partner's. There they swayed each other backwards and forwards and sideways by their still clasped hands, until Uncle Billy, with a glance at Uncle Jim's bandaged ankle, shoved him by sheer force down into his chair.

Uncle Jim was first to speak. "Caught, b' gosh! I mighter known you 'd be as big a fool as me! Look you, Billy Fall, do you know what you 've done? You 've druv me out er the streets whar I was makin' an honest livin', by day, on three crossin's! Yes," he laughed forgivingly, "you druv me out er it, by day, jest because I reckoned that some time I might run into your darned

fool face," — another laugh and a grasp of the hand, — "and then, b' gosh! not content with ruinin' my business *by day*, when I took to it at night, *you* took to goin' out at nights too, and so put a stopper on me there! Shall I tell you what else you did? Well, by the holy poker! I owe this sprained foot to your darned foolishness and my own, for it was getting away from *you* one night after the theatre that I got run into and run over!

"Ye see," he went on, unconscious of Uncle Billy's paling face, and with a *naïveté*, though perhaps not a delicacy, equal to Uncle Billy's own, "I had to play roots on you with that lock-box business and these letters, because I did not want you to know what I was up to, for you might n't like it, and might think it was lowerin' to the old firm, don't yer see? I would n't hev gone into it, but I was played out, and I don't mind tellin' you *now*, old man, that when I wrote you that first chipper letter from the lock-box I hed n't eat anythin' for two days. But it 's all right *now*," with a laugh. "Then I got into this business — thinkin' it nothin' — jest the very last thing — and do you know, old pard, I could n't tell anybody but *you* — and, in fact, I kept it jest to tell you

— I 've made nine hundred and fifty-six dollars! Yes, sir, *nine hundred and fifty-six dollars!* solid money, in Adams and Co.'s Bank, just out er my trade."

"Wot trade?" asked Uncle Billy.

Uncle Jim pointed to the corner, where stood a large, heavy crossing-sweeper's broom. "That trade."

"Certingly," said Uncle Billy, with a quick laugh.

"It 's an outdoor trade," said Uncle Jim gravely, but with no suggestion of awkwardness or apology in his manner; "and thar ain't much difference between sweepin' a crossin' with a broom and raking over tailing with a rake, *only — wot ye get* with a broom *you have handed to ye*, and ye don't have to *pick it up and fish it out er* the wet rocks and sluice-gushin'; and it 's a heap less tiring to the back."

"Certingly, you bet!" said Uncle Billy enthusiastically, yet with a certain nervous abstraction.

"I 'm glad ye say so; for yer see I did n't know at first how you 'd tumble to my doing it, until I 'd made my pile. And ef I had n't made it, I would n't hev set eyes on ye agin, old pard — never!"

"Do you mind my runnin' out a minit," said Uncle Billy, rising. "You see, I 've got a friend waitin' for me outside — and I reckon" — he stammered — "I 'll jest run out and send him off, so I kin talk comf'ble to ye."

"Ye ain't got anybody you 're owin' money to," said Uncle Jim earnestly, "anybody follerin' you to get paid, eh? For I kin jest set down right here and write ye off a check on the bank!"

"No," said Uncle Billy. He slipped out of the door, and ran like a deer to the waiting carriage. Thrusting a twenty-dollar gold-piece into the coachman's hand, he said hoarsely, "I ain't wantin' that kerridge just now; ye ken drive around and hev a private jamboree all by yourself the rest of the afternoon, and then come and wait for me at the top o' the hill yonder."

Thus quit of his gorgeous equipage, he hurried back to Uncle Jim, grasping his ten-thousand dollar draft in his pocket. He was nervous, he was frightened, but he must get rid of the draft and his story, and have it over. But before he could speak he was unexpectedly stopped by Uncle Jim.

"Now, look yer, Billy boy!" said Uncle

Jim; "I got suthin' to say to ye — and I might as well clear it off my mind at once, and then we can start fair agin. Now," he went on, with a half laugh, "was n't it enough for *me* to go on pretendin' I was rich and doing a big business, and gettin' up that lock-box dodge so as ye could n't find out whar I hung out and what I was doin' — was n't it enough for *me* to go on with all this play-actin', but *you*, you long-legged or'nary cuss! must get up and go to lyin' and play-actin', too!"

"*Me* play-actin'? *Me* lyin'?" gasped Uncle Billy.

Uncle Jim leaned back in his chair and laughed. "Do you think you could fool *me?* Do you think I did n't see through your little game o' going to that swell Oriental, jest as if ye 'd made a big strike — and all the while ye was n't sleepin' or eatin' there, but jest wrastlin' yer hash and having a roll down at the Good Cheer! Do you think I did n't spy on ye and find that out? Oh, you long-eared jackass-rabbit!"

He laughed until the tears came into his eyes, and Uncle Billy laughed too, albeit until the laugh on his face became quite fixed, and he was fain to bury his head in his handkerchief.

"And yet," said Uncle Jim, with a deep breath, "gosh! I was frighted — jest for a minit! I thought, mebbe, you *had* made a big strike — when I got your first letter — and I made up my mind what I 'd do! And then I remembered you was jest that kind of an open sluice that could n't keep anythin' to yourself, and you 'd have been sure to have yelled it out to *me* the first thing. So I waited. And I found you out, you old sinner!" He reached forward and dug Uncle Billy in the ribs.

"What *would* you hev done?" said Uncle Billy, after an hysterical collapse.

Uncle Jim's face grew grave again. "I 'd hev — I 'd — hev cl'ared out! Out er 'Frisco! out er Californy! out er Ameriky! I could n't have stud it! Don't think I would hev begrudged ye yer luck! No man would have been gladder than me." He leaned forward again, and laid his hand caressingly upon his partner's arm — "Don't think I 'd hev wanted to take a penny of it — but I — thar! I *could n't* hev stood up under it! To hev had *you*, you that I left behind, comin' down here rollin' in wealth and new partners and friends, and arrive upon me — and this shanty — and " — he

threw towards the corner of the room a terrible gesture, none the less terrible that it was illogical and inconsequent to all that had gone before — "and — and — *that broom!*"

There was a dead silence in the room. With it Uncle Billy seemed to feel himself again transported to the homely cabin at Cedar Camp and that fateful night, with his partner's strange, determined face before him as then. He even fancied that he heard the roaring of the pines without, and did not know that it was the distant sea.

But after a minute Uncle Jim resumed: —

"Of course you 've made a little raise somehow, or you would n't be here?"

"Yes," said Uncle Billy eagerly. "Yes! I 've got" — He stopped and stammered. "I 've got — a — few hundreds."

"Oh, oh!" said Uncle Jim cheerfully. He paused, and then added earnestly, "I say! You ain't got left, over and above your d—d foolishness at the Oriental, as much as five hundred dollars?"

"I 've got," said Uncle Billy, blushing a little over his first deliberate and affected lie, "I 've got at least five hundred and seventy-two dollars. Yes," he added tenta-

tively, gazing anxiously at his partner, "I 've got at least that."

"Je whillikins!" said Uncle Jim, with a laugh. Then eagerly, "Look here, pard! Then we 're on velvet! I 've got *nine* hundred; put your *five* with that, and I know a little ranch that we can get for twelve hundred. That 's what I 've been savin' up for — that 's my little game! No more minin' for *me*. It 's got a shanty twice as big as our old cabin, nigh on a hundred acres, and two mustangs. We can run it with two Chinamen and jest make it howl! Wot yer say — eh?" He extended his hand.

"I 'm in," said Uncle Billy, radiantly grasping Uncle Jim's. But his smile faded, and his clear simple brow wrinkled in two lines.

Happily Uncle Jim did not notice it. "Now, then, old pard," he said brightly, "we 'll have a gay old time to-night — one of our jamborees! I 've got some whiskey here and a deck o' cards, and we 'll have a little game, you understand, but not for 'keeps' now! No, siree; we 'll play for beans."

A sudden light illuminated Uncle Billy's face again, but he said, with a grim despera-

tion, "Not to-night! I 've got to go into town. That fren' o' mine expects me to go to the theayter, don't ye see? But I 'll be out to-morrow at sun-up, and we 'll fix up this thing o' the ranch."

"Seems to me you 're kinder stuck on this fren'," grunted Uncle Jim.

Uncle Billy's heart bounded at his partner's jealousy. "No — but I *must*, you know," he returned, with a faint laugh.

"I say — it ain't a *her*, is it?" said Uncle Jim.

Uncle Billy achieved a diabolical wink and a creditable blush at his lie.

"Billy?"

"Jim!"

And under cover of this festive gallantry Uncle Billy escaped. He ran through the gathering darkness, and toiled up the shifting sands to the top of the hill, where he found the carriage waiting.

"Wot," said Uncle Billy in a low confidential tone to the coachman, "wot do you 'Frisco fellers allow to be the best, biggest, and riskiest gamblin'-saloon here? Suthin' high-toned, you know?"

The negro grinned. It was the usual case of the extravagant spendthrift miner, though

perhaps he had expected a different question and order.

"Dey is de 'Polka,' de 'El Dorado,' and de 'Arcade' saloon, boss," he said, flicking his whip meditatively. "Most gents from de mines prefer de 'Polka,' for dey is dancing wid de gals frown in. But de real *prima facie* place for gents who go for buckin' agin de tiger and straight-out gamblin' is de 'Arcade.'"

"Drive there like thunder!" said Uncle Billy, leaping into the carriage.

. . . . . .

True to his word, Uncle Billy was at his partner's shanty early the next morning. He looked a little tired, but happy, and had brought a draft with him for five hundred and seventy-five dollars, which he explained was the total of his capital. Uncle Jim was overjoyed. They would start for Napa that very day, and conclude the purchase of the ranch; Uncle Jim's sprained foot was a sufficient reason for his giving up his present vocation, which he could also sell at a small profit. His domestic arrangements were very simple; there was nothing to take with him — there was everything to leave behind. And that afternoon, at sunset, the two re-

united partners were seated on the deck of the Napa boat as she swung into the stream.

Uncle Billy was gazing over the railing with a look of abstracted relief towards the Golden Gate, where the sinking sun seemed to be drawing towards him in the ocean a golden stream that was forever pouring from the Bay and the three-hilled city beside it. What Uncle Billy was thinking of, or what the picture suggested to him, did not transpire; for Uncle Jim, who, emboldened by his holiday, was luxuriating in an evening paper, suddenly uttered a long-drawn whistle, and moved closer to his abstracted partner. "Look yer," he said, pointing to a paragraph he had evidently just read, "just you listen to this, and see if we ain't lucky, you and me, to be jest wot we air — trustin' to our own hard work — and not thinkin' o' 'strikes' and 'fortins.' Jest unbutton yer ears, Billy, while I reel off this yer thing I 've jest struck in the paper, and see what d—d fools some men kin make o' themselves. And that theer reporter wot wrote it — must hev seed it reely!"

Uncle Jim cleared his throat, and holding the paper close to his eyes read aloud slowly: —

" ' A scene of excitement that recalled the palmy days of '49 was witnessed last night at the Arcade Saloon. A stranger, who might have belonged to that reckless epoch, and who bore every evidence of being a successful Pike County miner out on a " spree," appeared at one of the tables with a negro coachman bearing two heavy bags of gold. Selecting a faro-bank as his base of operations, he began to bet heavily and with apparent recklessness, until his play excited the breathless attention of every one. In a few moments he had won a sum variously estimated at from eighty to a hundred thousand dollars. A rumor went round the room that it was a concerted attempt to " break the bank " rather than the drunken freak of a Western miner, dazzled by some successful strike. To this theory the man's careless and indifferent bearing towards his extraordinary gains lent great credence. The attempt, if such it was, however, was unsuccessful. After winning ten times in succession the luck turned, and the unfortunate " bucker " was cleared out not only of his gains, but of his original investment, which may be placed roughly at twenty thousand dollars. This extraordinary play was

witnessed by a crowd of excited players, who were less impressed by even the magnitude of the stakes than the perfect *sang-froid* and recklessness of the player, who, it is said, at the close of the game tossed a twenty-dollar gold-piece to the banker and smilingly withdrew. The man was not recognized by any of the habitués of the place.'

"There!" said Uncle Jim, as he hurriedly slurred over the French substantive at the close, "did ye ever see such God-forsaken foolishness?'

Uncle Billy lifted his abstracted eyes from the current, still pouring its unreturning gold into the sinking sun, and said, with a deprecatory smile, "Never!"

Nor even in the days of prosperity that visited the Great Wheat Ranch of "Fall and Foster" did he ever tell his secret to his partner.

SEE YUP

I DON'T suppose that his progenitors ever gave him that name, or, indeed, that it was a *name* at all; but it was currently believed that — as pronounced "See *Up*" — it meant that lifting of the outer angle of the eye common to the Mongolian. On the other hand, I had been told that there was an old Chinese custom of affixing some motto or legend, or even a sentence from Confucius, as a sign above their shops, and that two or more words, which might be merely equivalent to "Virtue is its own reward," or "Riches are deceitful," were believed by the simple Californian miner to be the name of the occupant himself. Howbeit, "See Yup" accepted it with the smiling patience of his race, and never went by any other. If one of the tunnelmen always addressed him as "Brigadier-General," "Judge," or "Commodore," it was understood to be only the American fondness for ironic title, and was never used except in personal conversa-

tion. In appearance he looked like any other Chinaman, wore the ordinary blue cotton blouse and white drawers of the Sampan coolie, and, in spite of the apparent cleanliness and freshness of these garments, always exhaled that singular medicated odor — half opium, half ginger — which we recognized as the common "Chinese smell."

Our first interview was characteristic of his patient quality. He had done my washing for several months, but I had never yet seen him. A meeting at last had become necessary to correct his impressions regarding "buttons" — which he had seemed to consider as mere excrescences, to be removed like superfluous dirt from soiled linen. I had expected him to call at my lodgings, but he had not yet made his appearance. One day, during the noontide recess of the little frontier school over which I presided, I returned rather early. Two or three of the smaller boys, who were loitering about the school-yard, disappeared with a certain guilty precipitation that I suspected for the moment, but which I presently dismissed from my mind. I passed through the empty school-room to my desk, sat down, and began to prepare the coming lessons. Presently I

heard a faint sigh. Looking up, to my intense concern, I discovered a solitary Chinaman whom I had overlooked, sitting in a rigid attitude on a bench with his back to the window. He caught my eye and smiled sadly, but without moving.

"What are you doing here?" I asked sternly.

"Me washee shilts; me talkee 'buttons.'"

"Oh! you 're See Yup, are you?"

"Allee same, John."

"Well, come here."

I continued my work, but he did not move.

"Come here, hang it! Don't you understand?"

"Me shabbee, 'comme yea.' But me no shabbee Mellican boy, who catchee me, allee same. *You* 'comme yea'—*you* shabbee?"

Indignant, but believing that the unfortunate man was still in fear of persecution from the mischievous urchins whom I had evidently just interrupted, I put down my pen and went over to him. Here I discovered, to my surprise and mortification, that his long pigtail was held hard and fast by the closed window behind him, which the young rascals had shut down upon it, after having

first noiselessly fished it outside with a hook and line. I apologized, opened the window, and released him. He did not complain, although he must have been fixed in that uncomfortable position for some minutes, but plunged at once into the business that brought him there.

"But *why* did n't you come to my lodgings?" I asked.

He smiled sadly but intelligently.

"Mishtel Bally [Mr. Barry, my landlord] he owce me five dollee fo washee, washee. He no payee me. He say he knock hellee outee me allee time I come for payee. So me no come *housee*, me come *schoolee*. Shabbee? Mellican boy no good, but not so big as Mellican man. No can hurtee Chinaman so much. Shabbee?"

Alas! I knew that this was mainly true. Mr. James Barry was an Irishman, whose finer religious feelings revolted against paying money to a heathen. I could not find it in my heart to say anything to See Yup about the buttons; indeed, I spoke in complimentary terms about the gloss of my shirts, and I think I meekly begged him to come again for my washing. When I went home I expostulated with Mr. Barry, but

succeeded only in extracting from him the conviction that I was one of "thim black Republican fellys that worshiped naygurs." I had simply made an enemy of him. But I did not know that, at the same time, I had made a friend of See Yup!

I became aware of this a few days later, by the appearance on my desk of a small pot containing a specimen of camellia japonica in flower. I knew the school-children were in the habit of making presents to me in this furtive fashion,— leaving their own nosegays of wild flowers, or perhaps a cluster of roses from their parents' gardens, — but I also knew that this exotic was too rare to come from them. I remembered that See Yup had a Chinese taste for gardening, and a friend, another Chinaman, who kept a large nursery in the adjoining town. But my doubts were set at rest by the discovery of a small roll of red rice-paper containing my washing-bill, fastened to the camellia stalk. It was plain that this mingling of business and delicate gratitude was clearly See Yup's own idea. As the finest flower was the topmost one, I plucked it for wearing, when I found, to my astonishment, that it was simply wired to the stalk. This led me to look

at the others, which I found also wired! More than that, they seemed to be an inferior flower, and exhaled that cold, earthy odor peculiar to the camellia, even, as I thought, to an excess. A closer examination resulted in the discovery that, with the exception of the first flower I had plucked, they were one and all ingeniously constructed of thin slices of potato, marvelously cut to imitate the vegetable waxiness and formality of the real flower. The work showed an infinite and almost pathetic patience in detail, yet strangely incommensurate with the result, admirable as it was. Nevertheless, this was also like See Yup. But whether he had tried to deceive me, or whether he only wished me to admire his skill, I could not say. And as his persecution by my scholars had left a balance of consideration in his favor, I sent him a warm note of thanks, and said nothing of my discovery.

As our acquaintance progressed, I became frequently the recipient of other small presents from him: a pot of preserves of a quality I could not purchase in shops, and whose contents in their crafty, gingery dissimulation so defied definition that I never knew whether they were animal, vegetable,

or mineral; two or three hideous Chinese idols, "for luckee," and a diabolical fire-work with an irregular spasmodic activity that would sometimes be prolonged until the next morning. In return, I gave him some apparently hopeless oral lessons in English, and certain sentences to be copied, which he did with marvelous precision. I remember one instance when this peculiar faculty of imitation was disastrous in result. In setting him a copy, I had blurred a word which I promptly erased, and then traced the letters more distinctly over the scratched surface. To my surprise, See Yup triumphantly produced *his* copy with the erasion itself carefully imitated, and, in fact, much more neatly done than mine.

In our confidential intercourse, I never seemed to really get nearer to him. His sympathy and simplicity appeared like his flowers — to be a good-humored imitation of my own. I am satisfied that his particularly soulless laugh was not derived from any amusement he actually felt, yet I could not say it was forced. In his accurate imitations, I fancied he was only trying to evade any responsibility of his own. *That* devolved upon his taskmaster! In the at-

tention he displayed when new ideas were presented to him, there was a slight condescension, as if he were looking down upon them from his three thousand years of history.

"Don't you think the electric telegraph wonderful?" I asked one day.

"Very good for Mellican man," he said, with his aimless laugh; "plenty makee him jump!"

I never could tell whether he had confounded it with electro-galvanism, or was only satirizing our American haste and feverishness. He was capable of either. For that matter, we knew that the Chinese themselves possessed some means of secretly and quickly communicating with one another. Any news of good or ill import to their race was quickly disseminated through the settlement before *we* knew anything about it. An innocent basket of clothes from the wash, sent up from the river-bank, became in some way a library of information; a single slip of rice-paper, aimlessly fluttering in the dust of the road, had the mysterious effect of diverging a whole gang of coolie tramps away from our settlement.

When See Yup was not subject to the

persecutions of the more ignorant and brutal he was always a source of amusement to all, and I cannot recall an instance when he was ever taken seriously. The miners found diversions even in his alleged frauds and trickeries, whether innocent or retaliatory, and were fond of relating with great gusto his evasion of the Foreign Miners' Tax. This was an oppressive measure aimed principally at the Chinese, who humbly worked the worn-out "tailings" of their Christian fellow miners. It was stated that See Yup, knowing the difficulty — already alluded to — of identifying any particular Chinaman by *name*, conceived the additional idea of confusing recognition by intensifying the monotonous facial expression. Having paid his tax himself to the collector, he at once passed the receipt to his fellows, so that the collector found himself confronted in different parts of the settlement with the receipt and the aimless laugh of, apparently, See Yup himself. Although we all knew that there were a dozen Chinamen or more at work at the mines, the collector never was able to collect the tax from more than *two*, — See Yup and one See Yin, — and so great was *their* facial resemblance that the unfor-

tunate official for a long time hugged himself with the conviction that he had made See Yup *pay twice*, and withheld the money from the government! It is very probable that the Californian's recognition of the sanctity of a joke, and his belief that "cheating the government was only cheating himself," largely accounted for the sympathies of the rest of the miners.

But these sympathies were not always unanimous.

One evening I strolled into the bar-room of the principal saloon, which, so far as mere upholstery and comfort went, was also the principal house in the settlement. The first rains had commenced; the windows were open, for the influence of the south-west trades penetrated even this far-off mountain mining settlement, but, oddly enough, there was a fire in the large central stove, around which the miners had collected, with their steaming boots elevated on a projecting iron railing that encircled it. They were not attracted by the warmth, but the stove formed a social pivot for gossip, and suggested that mystic circle dear to the gregarious instinct. Yet they were decidedly a despondent group. For some moments the

silence was only broken by a gasp, a sigh, a muttered oath, or an impatient change of position. There was nothing in the fortunes of the settlement, nor in their own individual affairs to suggest this gloom. The singular truth was that they were, one and all, suffering from the pangs of dyspepsia.

Incongruous as such a complaint might seem to their healthy environment, — their outdoor life, their daily exercise, the healing balsam of the mountain air, their enforced temperance in diet, and the absence of all enervating pleasures, — it was nevertheless the incontestable fact. Whether it was the result of the nervous, excitable temperament which had brought them together in this feverish hunt for gold; whether it was the quality of the tinned meats or half-cooked provisions they hastily bolted, begrudging the time it took to prepare and to consume them; whether they too often supplanted their meals by tobacco or whiskey, the singular physiological truth remained that these young, finely selected adventurers, living the lives of the natural, aboriginal man, and looking the picture of health and strength, actually suffered more from indigestion than the pampered dwellers of the cities. The

quantity of "patent medicines," "bitters," "pills," "panaceas," and "lozenges" sold in the settlement almost exceeded the amount of the regular provisions whose effects they were supposed to correct. The sufferers eagerly scanned advertisements and placards. There were occasional "runs" on new "specifics," and general conversation eventually turned into a discussion of their respective merits. A certain childlike faith and trust in each new remedy was not the least distressing and pathetic of the symptoms of these grown-up, bearded men.

"Well, gentlemen," said Cyrus Parker, glancing around at his fellow sufferers, "ye kin talk of your patent medicines, and I 've tackled 'em all, but only the other day I struck suthin' that I 'm goin' to hang on to, you bet."

Every eye was turned moodily to the speaker, but no one said anything.

"And I did n't get it out er advertisements, nor off of circulars. I got it out er my head, just by solid thinking," continued Parker.

"What was it, Cy?" said one unsophisticated and inexperienced sufferer.

Instead of replying, Parker, like a true artist, knowing he had the ear of his audi-

ence, dramatically flashed a question upon them.

"Did you ever hear of a Chinaman having dyspepsy?"

"Never heard he had sabe enough to hev *anything*," said a scorner.

"No, but *did* ye?" insisted Parker.

"Well, no!" chorused the group. They were evidently struck with the fact.

"Of course you did n't," said Parker triumphantly. " 'Cos they *ain't*. Well, gentlemen, it did n't seem to me the square thing that a pesky lot o' yellow-skinned heathens should be built different to a white man, and never know the tortur' that a Christian feels; and one day, arter dinner, when I was just a-lyin' flat down on the bank, squirmin', and clutching the short grass to keep from yellin', who should go by but that pizened See Yup, with a grin on his face.

"' Mellican man plenty playee to him Joss after eatin',' sez he; ' but Chinaman smellee punk, allee same, and no hab got.'

"I knew the slimy cuss was just purtendin' he thought I was prayin' to my Joss, but I was that weak I had n't stren'th, boys, to heave a rock at him. Yet it gave me an idea."

"What was it?" they asked eagerly.

"I went down to his shop the next day, when he was alone, and I was feeling mighty bad, and I got hold of his pigtail and I allowed I 'd stuff it down his throat if he did n't tell me what he meant. Then he took a piece of punk and lit it, and put it under my nose, and, darn my skin, gentlemen, you migh' n't believe me, but in a minute I felt better, and after a whiff or two I was all right."

"Was it pow'ful strong, Cy?" asked the inexperienced one.

"No," said Parker, "and that 's just what 's got me. It was a sort o' dreamy, spicy smell, like a hot night. But as I could n't go 'round 'mong you boys with a lighted piece o' punk in my hand, ez if I was settin' off Fourth of July firecrackers, I asked him if he could n't fix me up suthin' in another shape that would be handier to use when I was took bad, and I 'd reckon to pay him for it like ez I 'd pay for any other patent medicine. So he fixed me up this."

He put his hand in his pocket, and drew out a small red paper which, when opened, disclosed a pink powder. It was gravely passed around the group.

"Why, it smells and tastes like ginger," said one.

"It is only ginger!" said another scornfully.

"Mebbe it is, and mebbe it is n't," returned Cy Parker stoutly. "Mebbe ut 's only my fancy. But if it 's the sort o' stuff to bring on that fancy, and that fancy *cures* me, it 's all the same. I 've got about two dollars' worth o' that fancy or that ginger, and I 'm going to stick to it. You hear me!" And he carefully put it back in his pocket.

At which criticisms and gibes broke forth. If he (Cy Parker), a white man, was going to "demean himself" by consulting a Chinese quack, he 'd better buy up a lot o' idols and stand 'em up around his cabin. If he had that sort o' confidences with See Yup, he ought to go to work with him on his cheap tailings, and be fumigated all at the same time. If he 'd been smoking an opium pipe, instead of smelling punk, he ought to be man enough to confess it. Yet it was noticeable that they were all very anxious to examine the packet again, but Cy Parker was alike indifferent to demand or entreaty.

A few days later I saw Abe Wynford,

one of the party, coming out of See Yup's wash-house. He muttered something in passing about the infamous delay in sending home his washing, but did not linger long in conversation. The next day I met another miner *at* the wash-house, but *he* lingered so long on some trifling details that I finally left him there alone with See Yup. When I called upon Poker Jack of Shasta, there was a singular smell of incense in *his* cabin, which he attributed to the very resinous quality of the fir logs he was burning. I did not attempt to probe these mysteries by any direct appeal to See Yup himself: I respected his reticence; indeed, if I had not, I was quite satisfied that he would have lied to me. Enough that his wash-house was well patronized, and he was decidedly "getting on."

It might have been a month afterwards that Dr. Duchesne was setting a broken bone in the settlement, and after the operation was over, had strolled into the Palmetto Saloon. He was an old army surgeon, much respected and loved in the district, although perhaps a little feared for the honest roughness and military precision of his speech. After he had exchanged salutations with the

miners in his usual hearty fashion, and accepted their invitation to drink, Cy Parker, with a certain affected carelessness which did not, however, conceal a singular hesitation in his speech, began: —

"I 've been wantin' to ask ye a question, Doc, — a sort o' darned fool question, ye know, — nothing in the way of consultation, don't you see, though it 's kin er in the way o' your purfeshun. Sabe?"

"Go on, Cy," said the doctor good-humoredly, "this is my dispensary hour."

"Oh! it ain't anything about symptoms, Doc, and there ain't anything the matter with me. It 's only just to ask ye if ye happened to know anything about the medical practice of these yer Chinamen?"

"*I* don't know," said the doctor bluntly, "and I don't know *anybody* who does."

There was a sudden silence in the bar, and the doctor, putting down his glass, continued with slight professional precision: —

"You see, the Chinese know nothing of anatomy from personal observation. Autopsies and dissection are against their superstitions, which declare the human body sacred, and are consequently never practiced."

There was a slight movement of inquiring interest among the party, and Cy Parker, after a meaning glance at the others, went on half aggressively, half apologetically: —

"In course, they ain't surgeons like you, Doc, but that don't keep them from having their own little medicines, just as dogs eat grass, you know. Now I want to put it to you, as a fa'r-minded man, if you mean ter say that, jest because those old women who sarve out yarbs and spring medicines in families don't know anything of anatomy, they ain't fit to give us their simple and nat'ral medicines?"

"But the Chinese medicines are not simple or natural," said the doctor coolly.

"Not simple?" echoed the party, closing round him.

"I don't mean to say," continued the doctor, glancing around at their eager, excited faces with an appearance of wonder, "that they are positively noxious, unless taken in large quantities, for they are not drugs at all, but I certainly should not call them 'simple.' Do *you* know what they principally are?"

"Well, no," said Parker cautiously, "perhaps not *exactly*."

"Come a little closer, and I 'll tell you."

Not only Parker's head but the others were bent over the counter. Dr. Duchesne uttered a few words in a tone inaudible to the rest of the company. There was a profound silence, broken at last by Abe Wynford's voice: —

"Ye kin pour me out about three fingers o' whiskey, Barkeep. I 'll take it straight."

"Same to me," said the others.

The men gulped down their liquor; two of them quietly passed out. The doctor wiped his lips, buttoned his coat, and began to draw on his riding-gloves.

"I 've heerd," said Poker Jack of Shasta, with a faint smile on his white face, as he toyed with the last drops of liquor in his glass, "that the darned fools sometimes smell punk as a medicine, eh?"

"Yes, *that* 's comparatively decent," said the doctor reflectively. "It 's only sawdust mixed with a little gum and formic acid."

"Formic acid? Wot 's that?"

"A very peculiar acid secreted by ants. It is supposed to be used by them offensively in warfare — just as the skunk, eh?"

But Poker Jack of Shasta had hurriedly declared that he wanted to speak to a man

who was passing, and had disappeared. The doctor walked to the door, mounted his horse, and rode away. I noticed, however, that there was a slight smile on his bronzed, impassive face. This led me to wonder if he was entirely ignorant of the purpose for which he had been questioned, and the effect of his information. I was confirmed in the belief by the remarkable circumstances that nothing more was said of it; the incident seemed to have terminated there, and the victims made no attempt to revenge themselves on See Yup. That they had one and all, secretly and unknown to one another, patronized him, there was no doubt; but, at the same time, as they evidently were not sure that Dr. Duchesne had not hoaxed them in regard to the quality of See Yup's medicines, they knew that an attack on the unfortunate Chinaman would in either case reveal their secret and expose them to the ridicule of their brother miners. So the matter dropped, and See Yup remained master of the situation.

Meantime he was prospering. The coolie gang he worked on the river, when not engaged in washing clothes, were "picking over" the "tailings," or refuse of gravel,

left on abandoned claims by successful miners. As there was no more expense attending this than in stone-breaking or rag-picking, and the feeding of the coolies, which was ridiculously cheap, there was no doubt that See Yup was reaping a fair weekly return from it; but, as he sent his receipts to San Francisco through coolie managers, after the Chinese custom, and did not use the regular Express Company, there was no way of ascertaining the amount. Again, neither See Yup nor his fellow countrymen ever appeared to have any money about them. In ruder times and more reckless camps, raids were often made by ruffians on their cabins or their traveling gangs, but never with any pecuniary result. This condition, however, it seemed was destined to change.

One Saturday See Yup walked into Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express office with a package of gold-dust, which, when duly weighed, was valued at five hundred dollars. It was consigned to a Chinese company in San Francisco. When the clerk handed See Yup a receipt, he remarked casually: —

"Washing seems to pay, See Yup."

"Washee velly good pay. You wantee washee, John?" said See Yup eagerly.

"No, no," said the clerk, with a laugh. "I was only thinking five hundred dollars would represent the washing of a good many shirts."

"No leplesent washee shirts at all! Catchee gold-dust when washee tailings. Shabbee?"

The clerk *did* "shabbee," and lifted his eyebrows. The next Saturday See Yup appeared with another package, worth about four hundred dollars, directed to the same consignee.

"Did n't pan out quite so rich this week, eh?" said the clerk engagingly.

"No," returned See Yup impassively; "next time he payee more."

When the third Saturday came, with the appearance of See Yup and four hundred and fifty dollars' worth of gold-dust, the clerk felt he was no longer bound to keep the secret. He communicated it to others, and in twenty-four hours the whole settlement knew that See Yup's coolie company were taking out an average of four hundred dollars per week from the refuse and tailings of the old abandoned Palmetto claim!

The astonishment of the settlement was

profound. In earlier days jealousy and indignation at the success of these degraded heathens might have taken a more active and aggressive shape, and it would have fared ill with See Yup and his companions. But the settlement had become more prosperous and law-abiding; there were one or two Eastern families and some foreign capital already there, and its jealousy and indignation were restricted to severe investigation and legal criticism. Fortunately for See Yup, it was an old-established mining law that an abandoned claim and its tailings became the property of whoever chose to work it. But it was alleged that See Yup's company had in reality "struck a lead," — discovered a hitherto unknown vein or original deposit of gold, not worked by the previous company, — and having failed legally to declare it by preëmption and public registry, in their foolish desire for secrecy, had thus forfeited their right to the property. A surveillance of their working, however, did not establish this theory; the gold that See Yup had sent away was of the kind that might have been found in the tailings overlooked by the late Palmetto owners. Yet it was a very large yield for mere refuse.

"Them Palmetto boys were mighty keerless after they 'd made their big 'strike' and got to work on the vein, and I reckon they threw a lot of gold away," said Cy Parker, who remembered their large-handed recklessness in the "flush days." "On'y that *we* did n't think it was white man's work to rake over another man's leavin's, we might hev had what them derned Chinamen hev dropped into. Tell ye what, boys, we 've been a little too 'high and mighty,' and we 'll hev to climb down."

At last the excitement reached its climax, and diplomacy was employed to effect what neither intimidation nor espionage could secure. Under the pretense of desiring to buy out See Yup's company, a select committee of the miners was permitted to examine the property and its workings. They found the great bank of stones and gravel, representing the cast-out débris of the old claim, occupied by See Yup and four or five plodding automatic coolies. At the end of two hours the committee returned to the saloon bursting with excitement. They spoke under their breath, but enough was gathered to satisfy the curious crowd that See Yup's pile of tailings was rich beyond their expec-

tations. The committee had seen with their own eyes gold taken out of the sand and gravel to the amount of twenty dollars in the two short hours of their examination. And the work had been performed in the stupidest, clumsiest, yet *patient* Chinese way. What might not white men do with better appointed machinery! A syndicate was at once formed. See Yup was offered twenty thousand dollars if he would sell out and put the syndicate in possession of the claim in twenty-four hours. The Chinaman received the offer stolidly. As he seemed inclined to hesitate, I am grieved to say that it was intimated to him that if he declined he might be subject to embarrassing and expensive legal proceedings to prove his property, and that companies would be formed to "prospect" the ground on either side of his heap of tailings. See Yup at last consented, with the proviso that the money should be paid in gold into the hands of a Chinese agent in San Francisco on the day of the delivery of the claim. The syndicate made no opposition to this characteristic precaution of the Chinaman. It was like them not to travel with money, and the implied uncomplimentary suspicion of danger

from the community was overlooked. See Yup departed the day that the syndicate took possession. He came to see me before he went. I congratulated him upon his good fortune; at the same time, I was embarrassed by the conviction that he was unfairly forced into a sale of his property at a figure far below its real value.

I think differently now.

At the end of the week it was said that the new company cleared up about three hundred dollars. This was not so much as the community had expected, but the syndicate was apparently satisfied, and the new machinery was put up. At the end of the next week the syndicate were silent as to their returns. One of them made a hurried visit to San Francisco. It was said that he was unable to see either See Yup or the agent to whom the money was paid. It was also noticed that there was no Chinaman remaining in the settlement. Then the fatal secret was out.

The heap of tailings had probably never yielded the See Yup company more than twenty dollars a week, the ordinary wage of such a company. See Yup had conceived the brilliant idea of "booming" it on a bor-

rowed capital of five hundred dollars in gold-dust, which he *openly* transmitted by express to his confederate and creditor in San Francisco, who in turn *secretly* sent it back to See Yup by coolie messengers, to be again openly transmitted to San Francisco. The package of gold-dust was thus passed backwards and forwards between debtor and creditor, to the grave edification of the Express Company and the fatal curiosity of the settlement. When the syndicate had gorged the bait thus thrown out, See Yup, on the day the self-invited committee inspected the claim, promptly "salted" the tailings by *conscientiously distributing the gold-dust over it* so deftly that it appeared to be its natural composition and yield.

I have only to bid farewell to See Yup, and close this reminiscence of a misunderstood man, by adding the opinion of an eminent jurist in San Francisco, to whom the facts were submitted: "So clever was this alleged fraud, that it is extremely doubtful if an action would lie against See Yup in the premises, there being no legal evidence of the 'salting,' and none whatever of his actual allegation that the gold-dust was the *ordinary* yield of the tailings, that implica-

tion resting entirely with the committee who examined it under false pretense, and who subsequently forced the sale by intimidation."

"THEN it is n't a question of property or next of kin?" said the consul.

"Lord! no," said the lady vivaciously. "Why, goodness me! I reckon old Desborough could, at any time before he died, have 'bought up' or 'bought out' the whole lot of his relatives on this side of the big pond, no matter what they were worth. No, it 's only a matter of curiosity and just sociableness."

The American consul at St. Kentigorn felt much relieved. He had feared it was only the old story of delusive quests for imaginary estates and impossible inheritances which he had confronted so often in nervous wan-eyed enthusiasts and obstreperous claimants from his own land. Certainly there was no suggestion of this in the richly dressed and be-diamonded matron before him, nor in her pretty daughter, charming in a Paris frock, alive with the consciousness of beauty and admiration, and yet a little

ennuyé from gratified indulgence. He knew the mother to be the wealthy widow of a New York millionaire, that she was traveling for pleasure in Europe, and a chance meeting with her at dinner a few nights before had led to this half-capricious, half-confidential appointment at the consulate.

"No," continued Mrs. Desborough; "Mr. Desborough came to America, when a small boy, with an uncle who died some years ago. Mr. Desborough never seemed to hanker much after his English relatives as long as I knew him, but now that I and Sadie are over here, why we guessed we might look 'em up and sort of sample 'em! 'Desborough' 's rather a good name," added the lady, with a complacency that, however, had a suggestion of query in it.

"Yes," said the consul; "from the French, I fancy."

"Mr. Desborough was English — very English," corrected the lady.

"I mean it may be an old Norman name," said the consul.

"Norman 's good enough for *me*," said the daughter, reflecting. "We 'll just settle it as Norman. I never thought about that *Des*."

"Only you may find it called 'Debborough' here, and spelt so," said the consul, smiling.

Miss Desborough lifted her pretty shoulders and made a charming grimace. "Then we won't acknowledge 'em. No Debborough for me!"

"You might put an advertisement in the papers, like the 'next of kin' notice, intimating, in the regular way, that they would 'hear of something to their advantage' — as they certainly would," continued the consul, with a bow. "It would be such a refreshing change to the kind of thing I 'm accustomed to, don't you know — this idea of one of my countrywomen coming over just to benefit English relatives! By Jove! I would n't mind undertaking the whole thing for you — it 's such a novelty." He was quite carried away with the idea.

But the two ladies were far from participating in this joyous outlook. "No," said Mrs. Desborough promptly, "that would n't do. You see," she went on with superb frankness, "that would be just giving ourselves away, and saying who *we* were before we found out what *they* were like. Mr. Desborough was all right in *his* way, but we

don't know anything about his *folks!* We ain't here on a mission to improve the Desboroughs, nor to gather in any 'lost tribes.'"

It was evident that, in spite of the humor of the situation and the levity of the ladies, there was a characteristic national practicalness about them, and the consul, with a sigh, at last gave the address of one or two responsible experts in genealogical inquiry, as he had often done before. He felt it was impossible to offer any advice to ladies as thoroughly capable of managing their own affairs as his fair countrywomen, yet he was not without some curiosity to know the result of their practical sentimental quest. That he should ever hear of them again he doubted. He knew that after their first loneliness had worn off in their gregarious gathering at a London hotel they were not likely to consort with their own country people, who indeed were apt to fight shy of one another, and even to indulge in invidious criticism of one another when admitted in that society to which they were all equally strangers. So he took leave of them on their way back to London with the belief that their acquaintance terminated with that brief incident. But he was mistaken.

In the year following he was spending his autumn vacation at a country house. It was an historic house, and had always struck him as being — even in that country of historic seats — a singular example of the vicissitudes of English manorial estates and the mutations of its lords. His host in his prime had been recalled from foreign service to unexpectedly succeed to an uncle's title and estate. That estate, however, had come into the possession of the uncle only through his marriage with the daughter of an old family whose portraits still looked down from the walls upon the youngest and alien branch. There were likenesses, effigies, memorials, and reminiscences of still older families who had occupied it through forfeiture by war or the favoritism of kings, and in its stately cloisters and ruined chapel was still felt the dead hand of its evicted religious founders, which could not be shaken off.

It was this strange individuality that affected all who saw it. For, however changed were those within its walls, whoever were its inheritors or inhabiters, Scrooby Priory never changed nor altered its own character. However incongruous or ill-assorted the por-

traits that looked from its walls, — so ill met that they might have flown at one another's throats in the long nights when the family were away, — the great house itself was independent of them all. The be-wigged, be-laced, and be-furbelowed of one day's gathering, the round-headed, steel-fronted, and prim-kerchiefed congregation of another day, and even the black-coated, bare-armed, and bare-shouldered assemblage of to-day had no effect on the austerities of the Priory. Modern houses might show the tastes and prepossessions of their dwellers, might have caught some passing trick of the hour, or have recorded the augmented fortunes or luxuriousness of the owner, but Scrooby Priory never! No one had dared even to disturb its outer rigid integrity; the breaches of time and siege were left untouched. It held its calm indifferent sway over all who passed its low-arched portals, and the consul was fain to believe that he — a foreign visitor — was no more alien to the house than its present owner.

"I 'm expecting a very charming compatriot of yours to-morrow," said Lord Beverdale as they drove from the station together. "You must tell me what to show her."

"I should think any countrywoman of mine would be quite satisfied with the Priory," said the consul, glancing thoughtfully towards the pile dimly seen through the park.

"I should n't like her to be bored here," continued Beverdale. "Algy met her at Rome, where she was occupying a palace with her mother — they 're very rich, you know. He found she was staying with Lady Minever at Hedham Towers, and I went over and invited her with a little party. She 's a Miss Desborough."

The consul gave a slight start, and was aware that Beverdale was looking at him.

"Perhaps you know her?" said Beverdale.

"Just enough to agree with you that she is charming," said the consul. "I dined with them, and saw them at the consulate."

"Oh yes; I always forget you are a consul. Then, of course, you know all about them. I suppose they 're very rich, and in society over there?" said Beverdale in a voice that was quite animated.

It was on the consul's lips to say that the late Mr. Desborough was an Englishman, and even to speak playfully of their proposed quest, but a sudden instinct withheld

him. After all, perhaps it was only a caprice, or idea, they had forgotten, — perhaps, who knows? — that they were already ashamed of. They had evidently "got on" in English society, if that was their real intent, and doubtless Miss Desborough, by this time, was quite as content with the chance of becoming related to the Earl of Beverdale, through his son and heir, Algernon, as if they had found a real Lord Desborough among their own relatives. The consul knew that Lord Beverdale was not a rich man, that like most men of old family he was not a slave to class prejudice; indeed, the consul had seen very few noblemen off the stage or out of the pages of a novel who were. So he said, with a slight affectation of authority, that there was as little doubt of the young lady's wealth as there was of her personal attractions.

They were nearing the house through a long avenue of chestnuts whose variegated leaves were already beginning to strew the ground beneath, and they could see the vista open upon the mullioned windows of the Priory, lighted up by the yellow October sunshine. In that sunshine stood a tall, clean-limbed young fellow, dressed in a

shooting-suit, whom the consul recognized at once as Lord Algernon, the son of his companion. As if to accent the graces of this vision of youth and vigor, near him, in the shadow, an old man had halted, hat in hand, still holding the rake with which he had been gathering the dead leaves in the avenue; his back bent, partly with years, partly with the obeisance of a servitor. There was something so marked in this contrast, in this old man standing in the shadow of the fading year, himself as dried and withered as the leaves he was raking, yet pausing to make his reverence to this passing sunshine of youth and prosperity in the presence of his coming master, that the consul, as they swept by, looked after him with a stirring of pain.

"Rather an old man to be still at work," said the consul.

Beverdale laughed. "You must not let him hear you say so; he considers himself quite as fit as any younger man in the place, and, by Jove! though he 's nearly eighty, I 'm inclined to believe it. He 's not one of our people, however; he comes from the village, and is taken on at odd times, partly to please himself. His great aim is to be in-

dependent of his children, — he has a granddaughter who is one of the maids at the Priory, — and to keep himself out of the workhouse. He does not come from these parts — somewhere farther north, I fancy. But he 's a tough lot, and has a deal of work in him yet."

"Seems to be going a bit stale lately," said Lord Algernon, "and I think is getting a little queer in his head. He has a trick of stopping and staring straight ahead, at times, when he seems to go off for a minute or two. There!" continued the young man, with a light laugh. "I say! he 's doing it now!" They both turned quickly and gazed at the bent figure — not fifty yards away — standing in exactly the same attitude as before. But, even as they gazed, he slowly lifted his rake and began his monotonous work again.

At Scrooby Priory, the consul found that the fame of his fair countrywoman had indeed preceded her, and that the other guests were quite as anxious to see Miss Desborough as he was. One of them had already met her in London; another knew her as one of the house party at the Duke of Northforeland's, where she had been a central fig-

ure. Some of her naïve sallies and frank criticisms were repeated with great unction by the gentlemen, and with some slight trepidation and a "fearful joy" by the ladies. He was more than ever convinced that mother and daughter had forgotten their lineal Desboroughs, and he resolved to leave any allusion to it to the young lady herself.

She, however, availed herself of that privilege the evening after her arrival. "Who 'd have thought of meeting *you* here?" she said, sweeping her skirts away to make room for him on a sofa. "It 's a coon's age since I saw you — not since you gave us that letter to those genealogical gentlemen in London."

The consul hoped that it had proved successful.

"Yes, but maw guessed we did n't care to go back to Hengist and Horsa, and when they let loose a lot of 'Debboroughs' and 'Daybrooks' upon us, maw kicked! We 've got a drawing ten yards long, that looks like a sour apple tree, with lots of Desboroughs hanging up on the branches like last year's pippins, and I guess about as worm-eaten. We took that well enough, but when it came to giving us a map of straight lines and dashes with names written under them like

an old Morse telegraph slip, struck by lightning, then maw and I guessed that it made us tired.

"You know," she went on, opening her clear gray eyes on the consul, with a characteristic flash of shrewd good sense through her quaint humor, "we never reckoned where this thing would land us, and we found we were paying a hundred pounds, not only for the Desboroughs, but all the people they 'd *married*, and their *children*, and children's children, and there were a lot of outsiders we 'd never heard of, nor wanted to hear of. Maw once thought she 'd got on the trail of a Plantagenet, and followed it keen, until she found she had been reading the dreadful thing upside down. Then we concluded we would n't take any more stock in the family until it had risen."

During this speech the consul could not help noticing that, although her attitude was playfully confidential to him, her voice really was pitched high enough to reach the ears of smaller groups around her, who were not only following her with the intensest admiration, but had shamelessly abandoned their own conversation, and had even faced towards her. Was she really posing in her *naïveté?*

There was a certain mischievous, even aggressive, consciousness in her pretty eyelids. Then she suddenly dropped both eyes and voice, and said to the consul in a genuine aside, "I like this sort of thing much better."

The consul looked puzzled. "What sort of thing?"

"Why, all these swell people, don't you see? those pictures on the walls! this elegant room! everything that has come down from the past, all ready and settled for you, you know — ages ago! Something you have n't to pick up for yourself and worry over."

But here the consul pointed out that the place itself was not "ancestral" as regarded the present earl, and that even the original title of his predecessors had passed away from it. "In fact, it came into the family by one of those 'outsiders' you deprecate. But I dare say you 'd find the place quite as comfortable with Lord Beverdale for a host as you would if you had found out he were a cousin," he added.

"Better," said the young lady frankly.

"I suppose your mother participates in these preferences?" said the consul, with a smile.

"No," said Miss Desborough, with the same frankness, "I think maw 's rather cut up at not finding a Desborough. She was invited down here, but *she* 's rather independent, you know, so she allowed I could take care of myself, while she went off to stay with the old Dowager Lady Mistowe, who thinks maw a very proper womanly person. I made maw mad by telling her that 's just what old Lady Mistowe would say of her cook — for I can't stand these people's patronage. However, I should n't wonder if I was invited here as a ' most original person.' "

But here Lord Algernon came up to implore her to sing them one of "those plantation songs;" and Miss Desborough, with scarcely a change of voice or manner, allowed herself to be led to the piano. The consul had little chance to speak with her again, but he saw enough that evening to convince him not only that Lord Algernon was very much in love with her, but that the fact had been equally and complacently accepted by the family and guests. That her present visit was only an opportunity for a formal engagement was clear to every woman in the house — not excepting, I fear, even

the fair subject of gossip herself. Yet she seemed so unconcerned and self-contained that the consul wondered if she really cared for Lord Algernon. And having thus wondered, he came to the conclusion that it did n't much matter, for the happiness of so practically organized a young lady, if she loved him or not.

It is highly probable that Miss Sadie Desborough had not even gone so far as to ask herself that question. She awoke the next morning with a sense of easy victory and calm satisfaction that had, however, none of the transports of affection. Her taste was satisfied by the love of a handsome young fellow, — a typical Englishman, — who, if not exactly original or ideal, was, she felt, of an universally accepted, "hall-marked" standard, the legitimate outcome of a highly ordered, carefully guarded civilization, whose repose was the absence of struggle or ambition; a man whose regular features were not yet differentiated from the rest of his class by any of those disturbing lines which people call character. Everything was made ready for her, without care or preparation; she had not even an ideal to realize or to modify. She could slip without any jar or

dislocation into this life which was just saved from self-indulgence and sybaritic luxury by certain conventional rules of activity and the occupation of amusement which, as obligations of her position, even appeared to suggest the novel aspect of a *duty!* She could accept all this without the sense of being an intruder in an unbroken lineage — thanks to the consul's account of the Beverdales' inheritance. She already pictured herself as the mistress of this fair domain, the custodian of its treasures and traditions, and the dispenser of its hospitalities, but — as she conscientiously believed — without pride or vanity, in her position; only an intense and thoughtful appreciation of it. Nor did she dream of ever displaying it ostentatiously before her less fortunate fellow countrywomen; on the contrary, she looked forward to their possible criticism of her casting off all transatlantic ties with an uneasy consciousness that was perhaps her nearest approach to patriotism. Yet, again, she reasoned that, as her father was an Englishman, she was only returning to her old home. As to her mother, she had already comforted herself by noticing certain discrepancies in that lady's temperament, which

led her to believe that she herself alone inherited her father's nature — for her mother was, of course, distinctly American! So little conscious was she of any possible snobbishness in this belief, that in her superb *naïveté* she would have argued the point with the consul, and employed a wit and dialect that were purely American.

She had slipped out of the Priory early that morning that she might enjoy alone, unattended and unciceroned, the aspect of that vast estate which might be hers for the mere accepting. Perhaps there was some instinct of delicacy in her avoiding Lord Algernon that morning; not wishing, as she herself might have frankly put it, "to take stock" of his inheritance in his presence. As she passed into the garden through the low postern door, she turned to look along the stretching façade of the main building, with the high stained windows of its banqueting-hall and the state chamber where a king had slept. Even in that crisp October air, and with the green of its ivied battlements against the gold of the distant wood, it seemed to lie in the languid repose of an eternal summer. She hurried on down the other terrace into the Italian garden, a

quaint survival of past grandeur, passed the great orangery and numerous conservatories, making a crystal hamlet in themselves — seeing everywhere the same luxury. But it was a luxury that she fancied was redeemed from the vulgarity of ostentation by the long custom of years and generations, so unlike the millionaire palaces of her own land; and, in her enthusiasm, she even fancied it was further sanctified by the grim monastic founders who had once been content with bread and pulse in the crumbling and dismantled refectory. In the plenitude of her feelings she felt a slight recognition of some beneficent being who had rolled this golden apple at her feet, and felt as if she really should like to "do good" in her sphere.

It so chanced that, passing through a small gate in the park, she saw walking, a little ahead of her, a young girl whom she at once recognized as a Miss Amelyn, one of the guests of the evening before. Miss Desborough remembered that she played the accompaniment of one or two songs upon the piano, and had even executed a long solo during the general conversation, without attention from the others, and apparently with

little irritation to herself, subsiding afterwards into an armchair, quite on the fringe of other people's conversation. She had been called "my dear" by one or two dowagers, and by her Christian name by the earl, and had a way of impalpably melting out of sight at times. These trifles led Miss Desborough to conclude that she was some kind of dependent or poor relation. Here was an opportunity to begin her work of "doing good." She quickened her pace and overtook Miss Amelyn.

"Let me walk with you," she said graciously.

The young English girl smiled assent, but looked her surprise at seeing the cynosure of last night's eyes unattended.

"Oh," said Sadie, answering the mute query, "I did n't want to be 'shown round' by anybody, and I 'm not going to bore *you* with asking to see sights either. We 'll just walk together; wherever *you* 're going is good enough for me."

"I 'm going as far as the village," said Miss Amelyn, looking down doubtfully at Sadie's smart French shoes — "if you care to walk so far."

Sadie noticed that her companion was

more solidly booted, and that her straight, short skirts, although less stylish than her own, had a certain character, better fitted to the freer outdoor life of the country. But she only said, however, "The village will do," and gayly took her companion's arm.

"But I 'm afraid you 'll find it very uninteresting, for I am going to visit some poor cottages," persisted Miss Amelyn, with a certain timid ingenuousness of manner which, however, was as distinct as Miss Desborough's bolder frankness. "I promised the rector's daughter to take her place to-day."

"And I feel as if I was ready to pour oil and wine to any extent," said Miss Desborough, "so come along!"

Miss Amelyn laughed, and yet glanced around her timidly, as if she thought that Miss Desborough ought to have a larger and more important audience. Then she continued more confidentially and boldly, "But it is n't at all like 'slumming,' you know. These poor people here are not very bad, and are not at all extraordinary."

"Never mind," said Sadie, hurrying her along. After a pause she went on, "You know the Priory very well, I guess?"

"I lived there when I was a little girl,

with my aunt, the Dowager Lady Beverdale," said Miss Amelyn. "When my cousin Fred, who was the young heir, died, and the present Lord Beverdale succeeded, — *he* never expected it, you know, for there were two lives, his two elder brothers, besides poor Fred's, between, but they both died, — we went to live in the Dower House."

"The Dower House?" repeated Sadie.

"Yes, Lady Beverdale's separate property."

"But I thought all this property — the Priory — came into the family through *her*."

"It did — this was the Amelyns' place; but the oldest son or nearest male heir always succeeds to the property and title."

"Do you mean to say that the present Lord Beverdale turned that old lady out?"

Miss Amelyn looked shocked. "I mean to say," she said gravely, "Lady Beverdale would have had to go when her own son became of age, had he lived." She paused, and then said timidly, "Is n't it that way in America?"

"Dear no!" Miss Desborough had a faint recollection that there was something in the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence against primogeniture. "No!

the men have n't it *all* their own way *there* — not much!"

Miss Amelyn looked as if she did not care to discuss this problem. After a few moments Sadie continued, "You and Lord Algernon are pretty old friends, I guess?"

"No," replied Miss Amelyn. "He came once or twice to the Priory for the holidays, when he was quite a boy at Marlborough — for the family were n't very well off, and his father was in India. He was a very shy boy, and of course no one ever thought of him succeeding."

Miss Desborough felt half inclined to be pleased with this, and yet half inclined to resent this possible snubbing of her future husband. But they were nearing the village, and Miss Amelyn turned the conversation to the object of her visit. It was a new village — an unhandsome village, for all that it stood near one of the gates of the park. It had been given over to some mines that were still worked in its vicinity, and to the railway, which the uncle of the present earl had resisted; but the railway had triumphed, and the station for Scrooby Priory was there. There was a grim church, of a blackened or weather-beaten stone, on the

hill, with a few grim Amelyns reposing cross-legged in the chancel, but the character of the village was as different from the Priory as if it were in another county. They stopped at the rectory, where Miss Amelyn provided herself with certain doles and gifts, which the American girl would have augmented with a five-pound note but for Miss Amelyn's horrified concern. "As many shillings would do, and they would be as grateful," she said. "More they would n't understand."

"Then keep it, and dole it out as you like," said Sadie quickly.

"But I don't think that — that Lord Beverdale would quite approve," hesitated Miss Amelyn.

The pretty brow of her companion knit, and her gray eyes flashed vivaciously. "What has *he* to do with it?" she said pertly; "besides, you say these are not *his* poor. Take that five-pound note — or — I 'll *double it*, get it changed into sovereigns at the station, and hand 'em round to every man, woman, and child."

Miss Amelyn hesitated. The American girl looked capable of doing what she said; perhaps it was a national way of almsgiv-

ing! She took the note, with the mental reservation of making a full confession to the rector and Lord Beverdale.

She was right in saying that the poor of Scrooby village were not interesting. There was very little squalor or degradation; their poverty seemed not a descent, but a condition to which they had been born; the faces which Sadie saw were dulled and apathetic rather than sullen or rebellious; they stood up when Miss Amelyn entered, paying *her* the deference, but taking little note of the pretty butterfly who was with her, or rather submitting to her frank curiosity with that dull consent of the poor, as if they had lost even the sense of privacy, or a right to respect. It seemed to the American girl that their poverty was more indicated by what they were *satisfied* with than what she thought they *missed*. It is to be feared that this did not add to Sadie's sympathy; all the beggars she had seen in America wanted all they could get, and she felt as if she were confronted with an inferior animal.

"There 's a wonderful old man lives here," said Miss Amelyn, as they halted before a stone and thatch cottage quite on the outskirts of the village. "We can't call him

one of our poor, for he still works, although over eighty, and it 's his pride to keep out of the poorhouse, and, as he calls it, ' off ' the hands of his granddaughters. But we manage to do something for *them*, and we hope he profits by it. One of them is at the Priory; they 're trying to make a maid of her, but her queer accent — they 're from the north — is against her with the servants. I am afraid we won't see old Debs, for he 's at work again to-day, though the doctor has warned him."

"Debs! What a funny name!"

"Yes, but as many of these people cannot read or write, the name is carried by the ear, and not always correctly. Some of the railway navvies, who come from the north as he does, call him ' Debbers.' "

They were obliged to descend into the cottage, which was so low that it seemed to have sunk into the earth until its drooping eaves of thatch mingled with the straw heap beside it. Debs was not at home. But his granddaughter was there, who, after a preliminary "bob," continued the stirring of the pot before the fire in tentative silence.

"I am sorry to find that your grandfather has gone to work again in spite of the doctor's orders," said Miss Amelyn.

The girl continued to stir the pot, and then said without looking up, but as if also continuing a train of aggressive thoughts with her occupation: "Eay, but 'e 's so set oop in 'issen 'ee döan't take orders from nob-but — leastways doctor. Möinds 'em now moor nor a floy. Says 'ee knaws there nowt wrong wi' 'is 'eart. Mout be roight — how'siver, sarten sewer, 'is *'ead* 's a' in a muddle! Toims 'ee goes off stamrin' and starin' at nowt, as if 'ee a'nt a n'aporth o' sense. How'siver I be doing my duty by 'em — and 'ere 's 'is porritch when a' cooms — 'gin a' be sick or maad."

What the American understood of the girl's speech and manner struck her as having very little sympathy with either her aged relative or her present visitor. And there was a certain dogged selfish independence about her that Miss Desborough half liked and half resented. However, Miss Amelyn did not seem to notice it, and, after leaving a bottle of port for the grandfather, she took her leave and led Sadie away. As they passed into the village a carriage, returning to the Priory, filled with their fellow guests, dashed by, but was instantly pulled up at a word from Lord Algernon,

who leaped from the vehicle, hat in hand, and implored the fair truant and her companion to join them.

"We 're just making a tour around Windover Hill, and back to luncheon," he said, with a rising color. "We missed you awfully! If we had known you were so keen on 'good works,' and so early at it, by Jove! we 'd have got up a 'slummin' party,' and all joined!"

"And you have n't seen half," said Lord Beverdale from the box. "Miss Amelyn 's too partial to the village. There 's an old drunken retired poacher somewhere in a hut in Crawley Woods, whom it 's death to approach, except with a large party. There 's malignant diphtheria over at the South Farm, eight down with measles at the keeper's, and an old woman who has been bedridden for years."

But Miss Desborough was adamant, though sparkling. She thanked him, but said she had just seen an old woman "who had been lying in bed for twenty years, and had n't spoken the truth once!" She proposed "going outside of Lord Beverdale's own preserves of grain-fed poor," and starting up her own game. She would return in

time for luncheon — if she could; if not, she "should annex the gruel of the first kind incapable she met."

Yet, actually, she was far from displeased at being accidentally discovered by these people while following out her capricious whim of the morning. One or two elder ladies, who had fought shy of her frocks and her frankness the evening before, were quite touched now by this butterfly who was willing to forego the sunlight of society, and soil her pretty wings on the haunts of the impoverished, with only a single companion, — of her own sex! — and smiled approvingly. And in her present state of mind, remembering her companion's timid attitude towards Lord Beverdale's opinions, she was not above administering this slight snub to him in her presence.

When they had driven away, with many regrets, Miss Amelyn was deeply concerned. "I am afraid," she said, with timid conscientiousness, "I have kept you from going with them. And you must be bored with what you have seen, I know. I don't believe you really care one bit for it — and you are only doing it to please me."

"Trot out the rest of your show," said

Sadie promptly, "and we 'll wind up by lunching with the rector."

"He 'd be too delighted," said Miss Amelyn, with disaster written all over her girlish, truthful face, "but — but — you know — it really would n't be quite right to Lord Beverdale. You 're his principal guest — you know, and — they 'd think I had taken you off."

"Well," said Miss Desborough impetuously, "what 's the matter with that inn — the Red Lion? We can get a sandwich there, I guess. I 'm not *very* hungry."

Miss Amelyn looked horrified for a moment, and then laughed; but immediately became concerned again. "No! listen to me, *really* now! Let me finish my round alone! You 'll have ample time if you go *now* to reach the Priory for luncheon. Do, please! It would be ever so much better for everybody. I feel quite guilty as it is, and I suppose I am already in Lord Beverdale's black books."

The trouble in the young girl's face was unmistakable, and as it suited Miss Desborough's purpose just as well to show her independence by returning, as she had set out, alone, she consented to go. Miss Amelyn

showed her a short cut across the park, and they separated — to meet at dinner. In this brief fellowship, the American girl had kept a certain supremacy and half-fascination over the English girl, even while she was conscious of an invincible character in Miss Amelyn entirely different from and superior to her own. Certainly there was a difference in the two peoples. Why else this inherited conscientious reverence for Lord Beverdale's position, shown by Miss Amelyn, which she, an American alive to its practical benefits, could not understand? Would Miss Amelyn and Lord Algernon have made a better match? The thought irritated her, even while she knew that she herself possessed the young man's affections, the power to marry him, and, as she believed, kept her own independence in the matter.

As she entered the iron gates at the lower end of the park, and glanced at the interwoven cipher and crest of the Amelyns still above, she was conscious that the wind was blowing more chill, and that a few clouds had gathered. As she walked on down the long winding avenue, the sky became overcast, and, in one of those strange contrasts

of the English climate, the glory of the whole day went out with the sunshine. The woods suddenly became wrinkled and gray, the distant hills sombre, the very English turf beneath her feet grew brown; a mile and a half away, through the opening of the trees, the west part of the Priory looked a crumbling, ivy-eaten ruin. A few drops of rain fell. She hurried on. Suddenly she remembered that the avenue made a long circuit before approaching the house, and that its lower end, where she was walking, was but a fringe of the park. Consequently there must be a short cut across some fields and farm buildings to the back of the park and the Priory. She at once diverged to the right, presently found a low fence, which she clambered over, and again found a foot-path which led to a stile. Crossing that, she could see the footpath now led directly to the Priory, — now a grim and austere looking pile in the suddenly dejected landscape, — and that it was probably used only by the servants and farmers. A gust of wind brought some swift needles of rain to her cheek; she could see the sad hills beyond the Priory already veiling their faces; she gathered her skirts and ran. The next field

was a long one, but beside the further stile was a small clump of trees, the only ones between her and the park. Hurrying on to that shelter, she saw that the stile was already occupied by a tall but bent figure, holding a long stick in his hand, which gave him the appearance, against the horizon, of the figure of Time leaning on his scythe. As she came nearer she saw it was, indeed, an old man, half resting on his rake. He was very rugged and weather-beaten, and although near the shelter of the trees, apparently unmindful of the rain that was falling on his bald head, and the limp cap he was holding uselessly in one hand. He was staring at her, yet apparently unconscious of her presence. A sudden instinct came upon her — it was "Debs"!

She went directly up to him, and with that frank common sense which ordinarily distinguished her, took his cap from his hand and put it on his head, grasped his arm firmly, and led him to the shelter of the tree. Then she wiped the raindrops from his face with her handkerchief, shook out her own dress and her wet parasol, and, propping her companion against the tree, said: —

"There, Mr. Debs! I 've heard of people who did n't know enough to come in when it rained, but I never met one before."

The old man started, lifted his hairy, sinewy arm, bared to the elbow, and wiped his bare throat with the dry side of it. Then a look of intelligence — albeit half aggressive — came into his face. "Wheer bëest tha going?" he asked.

Something in his voice struck Sadie like a vague echo. Perhaps it was only the queer dialect — or some resemblance to his granddaughter's voice. She looked at him a little more closely as she said: —

"To the Priory."

"Whäat?"

She pointed with her parasol to the gray pile in the distance. It was possible that this demented peasant did n't even *understand* English.

"The hall. Oh, ay!" Suddenly his brows knit ominously as he faced her. "An' wassist tha doin' drest oop in this foinery? Wheer gettist thee that goawn? Thissen, or thy mäester? Nowt even a napron, fit for thy wark as mäaid at serviss; an' parson a gettin' tha pläace at Hall! So thou 'lt be high and moity will tha! thou 'lt not

walk wi' mäaids, but traipse by thissen like a slut in the toon — dang tha!"

Although it was plain to Sadie that the old man, in his wandering perception, had mistaken her for his granddaughter in service at the Priory, there was still enough rudeness in his speech for her to have resented it. But, strange to say, there was a kind of authority in it that touched her with an uneasiness and repulsion that was stronger than any other feeling. "I think you have mistaken me for some one else," she said hurriedly, yet wondering why she had admitted it, and even irritated at the admission. "I am a stranger here, a visitor at the Priory. I called with Miss Amelyn at your cottage, and saw your other granddaughter; that 's how I knew your name."

The old man's face changed. A sad, senile smile of hopeless bewilderment crept into his hard mouth; he plucked his limp cap from his head and let it hang submissively in his fingers, as if it were his sole apology. Then he tried to straighten himself, and said, "Naw offins, miss, naw offins! If tha knaws mea tha 'll knaw I 'm grandfeyther to two galls as moight be tha owern age; tha 'll tell 'ee that old Debs at haaty

years 'as warked and niver lost a day as man or boy; has niver coome oopen 'em for n'aporth. An' 'e 'll keep out o' warkus till he doy. An' 'ee 's put by enow to loy wi' his own feythers in Lanksheer, an' not liggen aloane in parson's choorchyard."

It was part of her uneasiness that, scarcely understanding or, indeed, feeling any interest in these maundering details, she still seemed to have an odd comprehension of his character and some reminiscent knowledge of him, as if she were going through the repetition of some unpleasant dream. Even his wrinkled face was becoming familiar to her. Some weird attraction was holding her; she wanted to get away from it as much as she wanted to analyze it. She glanced ostentatiously at the sky, prepared to open her parasol, and began to edge cautiously away.

"Then tha beant from these pearts?" he said suddenly.

"No, no," she said quickly and emphatically, — "no, I 'm an American."

The old man started and moved towards her, eagerly, his keen eyes breaking through the film that at times obscured them. "'Merrikan! tha baist 'Merrikan? Then

tha knaws ma son John, 'ee war nowt but a bairn when brether Dick took un to 'Merriky! Naw! Now! that wor fifty years sen! — niver wroate to his old feyther — niver coomed back. 'Ee wor tall-loike, an' thea said 'e feavored mea." He stopped, threw up his head, and with his skinny fingers drew back his long, straggling locks from his sunken cheeks, and stared in her face. The quick transition of fascination, repulsion, shock, and indefinable apprehension made her laugh hysterically. To her terror he joined in it, and eagerly clasped her wrists. "Eh, lass! tha knaws John — tha coomes from un to ole grandfeyther. Who-rr-u! Eay! but tha tho't to fool mea, did tha, lass? Whoy, I knoawed tha voice, for a' tha foine peacock feathers. So tha be John's gell coom from Ameriky. Dear! a dear! Coom neaur, lass! let 's see what tha 's loike. Eh, but thou 'lt kiss tha grandfather, sewerly?"

A wild terror and undefined consternation had completely overpowered her! But she made a desperate effort to free her wrists, and burst out madly: —

"Let me go! How dare you! I don't know you or yours! I 'm nothing to you or

your kin! My name is Desborough — do you understand — do you hear me, Mr. Debs? — *Desborough!*"

At the word the old man's fingers stiffened like steel around her wrists, as he turned upon her a hard, invincible face.

"So thou 'lt call thissen Des-borough, wilt thä? Let me tell thä, then, that 'Debs,' 'Debban,' 'Debbrook,' and 'Des-borough' are all a seame! Ay! thy feyther and thy feyther's feyther! Thou 'lt be ä Des-borough, will thä? Dang thä! and look doon on tha kin, and dress thissen in silks o' shame! Tell 'ee thou 'rt an ass, gell! Don't tha hear? An ass! for all tha bean John's bairn! An ass! that 's what tha beast!"

With flashing eyes and burning cheeks she made one more supreme effort, lifting her arms, freeing her wrists, and throwing the old man staggering from her. Then she leaped the stile, turned, and fled through the rain. But before she reached the end of the field she stopped! She had freed herself — she was stronger than he — what had she to fear? He was crazy! Yes, he *must* be crazy, and he had insulted her, but he was an old man — and God knows what!

Her heart was beating rapidly, her breath was hurried, but she ran back to the stile.

He was not there. The field sloped away on either side of it. But she could distinguish nothing in the pouring rain above the wind-swept meadow. He must have gone home. Relieved for a moment she turned and hurried on towards the Priory.

But at every step she was followed, not by the old man's presence, but by what he had said to her, which she could not shake off as she had shaken off his detaining fingers. Was it the ravings of insanity, or had she stumbled unwittingly upon some secret — was it after all a *secret?* Perhaps it was something they all knew, or would know later. And she had come down here for this. For back of her indignation, back even of her disbelief in his insanity, there was an awful sense of truth! The names he had flung out, of "Debs," "Debban," and "Debbrook" now flashed upon her as something she had seen before, but had not understood. Until she satisfied herself of this, she felt she could not live or breathe! She loathed the Priory, with its austere exclusiveness, as it rose before her; she wished she had never entered it; but it contained

that which she must know, and know at once! She entered the nearest door and ran up the grand staircase. Her flushed face and disordered appearance were easily accounted for by her exposure to the sudden storm. She went to her bedroom, sent her maid to another room to prepare a change of dress, and sinking down before her traveling-desk, groped for a document. Ah! there it was — the expensive toy that she had played with! She hastily ran over its leaves to the page she already remembered. And there, among the dashes and perpendicular lines she had jested over last night, on which she had thought was a collateral branch of the line, stood her father's name and that of Richard, his uncle, with the bracketed note in red ink, "see Debbrook, Daybrook, Debbers, and Debs." Yes! this gaunt, half-crazy, overworked peasant, content to rake the dead leaves before the rolling chariots of the Beverdales, was her grandfather; that poorly clad girl in the cottage, and even the menial in the scullery of this very house that might be *hers*, were her *cousins!* She burst into a laugh, and then refolded the document and put it away.

At luncheon she was radiant and sparkling. Her drenched clothes were an excuse for a new and ravishing toilette. She had never looked so beautiful before, and significant glances were exchanged between some of the guests, who believed that the expected proposal had already come. But those who were of the carriage party knew otherwise, and of Lord Algernon's disappointment. Lord Beverdale contented himself with rallying his fair guest on the becomingness of "good works." But he continued, "You 're offering a dreadful example to these ladies, Miss Desborough, and I know I shall never hereafter be able to content them with any frivolous morning amusement at the Priory. For myself, when I am grown gouty and hideous, I know I shall bloom again as a district visitor."

Yet under this surface sparkle and nervous exaltation Sadie never lost consciousness of the gravity of the situation. If her sense of humor enabled her to see one side of its grim irony; if she experienced a wicked satisfaction in accepting the admiration and easy confidence of the high-born guests, knowing that her cousin had assisted in preparing the meal they were eating, she had

never lost sight of the practical effect of the discovery she had made. And she had come to a final resolution. She should leave the Priory at once, and abandon all idea of a matrimonial alliance with its heir! Inconsistent as this might seem to her selfish, worldly nature, it was nevertheless in keeping with a certain pride and independence that was in her blood. She did not love Lord Algernon, neither did she love her grandfather; she was equally willing to sacrifice either or both; she knew that neither Lord Algernon nor his father would make her connections an objection, however they might wish to keep the fact a secret, or otherwise dispose of them by pensions or emigration, but she could not bear to *know it herself!* She never could be happy as the mistress of Scrooby Priory with that knowledge; she did not idealize it as a principle! Carefully weighing it by her own practical common sense, she said to herself that "it would n't pay." The highest independence is often akin to the lowest selfishness; she did not dream that the same pride which kept her grandfather from the workhouse and support by his daughters, and had even kept him from communicating with his own

son, now kept her from acknowledging them, even for the gift of a title and domain. There was only one question before her: should she stay long enough to receive the proposal of Lord Algernon, and then decline it? Why should she not snatch that single feminine joy out of the ashes of her burnt-up illusion? She knew that an opportunity would be offered that afternoon. The party were to take tea at Broxby Hall, and Lord Algernon was to drive her there in his dog-cart. Miss Desborough had gone up to her bedroom to put on a warmer cloak, and had rung twice or thrice impatiently for her maid.

When the girl made her appearance, apologetic, voluble, and excited, Miss Desborough scarcely listened to her excuses, until a single word suddenly arrested her attention. It was "old Debs."

"What *are* you talking about?" said Sadie, pausing in the adjustment of her hat on her brown hair.

"Old Debs, miss, — that 's what they call him; an old park-keeper, just found dead in a pool of water in the fields; the grandfather of one of the servants here; and there 's such an excitement in the servants'

hall. The gentlemen all knew it, too, for I heard Lord Algernon say that he was looking very queer lately, and might have had a fit; and Lord Beverdale has sent word to the coroner. And only think, the people here are such fools that they dare n't touch or move the poor man, and him lyin' there in the rain all the time, until the coroner comes!"

Miss Desborough had been steadily regarding herself in the glass to see if she had turned pale. She had. She set her teeth together until the color partly returned. But she kept her face away from the maid. "That 'll do," she said quietly. "You can tell me all later. I have some important news myself, and I may not go out after all. I want you to take a note for me." She went to her table, wrote a line in pencil, folded it, scribbled an address upon it, handed it to the girl, and gently pushed her from the room.

. . . . . .

The consul was lingering on the terrace beside one of the carriages; at a little distance a groom was holding the nervous thoroughbred of Lord Algernon's dog-cart. Suddenly he felt a touch on his shoulder, and

Miss Desborough's maid put a note in his hand. It contained only a line: —

Please come and see me in the library, but without making any fuss about it — at once. S. D.

The consul glanced around him; no one had apparently noticed the incident. He slipped back into the house and made his way to the library. It was a long gallery; at the further end Miss Desborough stood cloaked, veiled, and coquettishly hatted. She was looking very beautiful and animated. "I want you to please do me a great favor," she said, with an adorable smile, "as your own countrywoman, you know — for the sake of Fourth of July and Pumpkin Pie and the Old Flag! I don't want to go to this circus to-day. I am going to leave here to-night! I am! Honest Injin! I want *you* to manage it. I want you to say that as consul you 've received important news for me: the death of some relative, if you like; or better, something *affecting my property*, you know," with a little satirical laugh. "I guess that would fetch 'em! So go at once."

"But really, Miss Desborough, do let us talk this over before you decide!" implored the bewildered consul. "Think what a disappointment to your host and these ladies. Lord Algernon expects to drive you there; he is already waiting! The party was got up for you!" Miss Desborough made a slight grimace. "I mean you ought to sacrifice something — but I trust there is really nothing serious — to them!"

"If *you* do not speak to them, I will!" said Miss Desborough firmly. "If you say what I tell you, it will come the more plausibly from you. Come! My mind is made up. One of us must break the news! Shall it be you or I?" She drew her cloak over her shoulders and made a step forwards.

The consul saw she was determined. "Then wait here till I return, but keep yourself out of sight," he said, and hurried away. Between the library and the terrace he conceived a plan. His perplexity lent him a seriousness which befitted the gravity of the news he had to disclose. "I am sorry to have to tell you," he said, taking Lord Beverdale aside, "that I was the unlucky bearer of some sad news to Miss Desborough this morning, through my consular letters —

some matter concerning the death of a relation of hers, and some wearisome question of property. I thought that it was of little importance, and that she would not take it seriously, but I find I was mistaken. It may even oblige her to catch the London train to-night. I promised to make her excuses to you for the present, and I 'm afraid I must add my own to them, as she wishes me to stay and advise her in this matter, which requires some prompt action."

Miss Desborough was right: the magic word "property" changed the slight annoyance on the earl's face to a sympathetic concern. "Dear me! I trust it is nothing really serious," he said. "Of course you will advise her, and, by the way, if my solicitor, Withers, who 'll be here to-morrow, can do anything, you know, call him in. I hope she 'll be able to see me later. It could not be a *near* relation who died, I fancy; she has no brothers or sisters, I understand."

"A cousin, I think; an old friend," said the consul hastily. He heard Lord Beverdale say a few words to his companions, saw with a tinge of remorse a cloud settle upon Lord Algernon's fresh face, as he appealed in a whisper to old Lady Mesthyn, who

leaned forward from the carriage, and said, "If the dear child thought *I* could be of any service, I should only be too glad to stay with her."

"I knew she would appreciate Lady Mesthyn's sympathy," said the ingenious consul quickly, "but I really think the question is more a business one — and" —

"Ah, yes," said the old lady, shaking her head, "it 's dreadful, of course, but we must all think of *that!*"

As the carriage drove away, the consul hurried back a little viciously to his fair countrywoman. "There!" he said, "I have done it! If I have managed to convey either the idea that you are a penniless orphan, or that I have official information that you are suspected of a dynamite conspiracy, don't blame me! And now," he said, "as I have excused myself on the ground that I must devote myself to this dreadful business of yours, perhaps you 'll tell me *what* it really is."

"Not a word more," said Miss Desborough; "except," she added, — checking her smile with a weary gesture, — "except that I want to leave this dreadful place at once! There! don't ask me any more!"

There could be no doubt of the girl's sin-

cerity. Nor was it the extravagant caprice of a petted idol. What had happened? He might have believed in a lovers' quarrel, but he knew that she and Lord Algernon could have had no private interview that evening. He must perforce accept her silence, yet he could not help saying: —

"You seemed to like the place so much last night. I say, you haven't seen the Priory ghost, have you?"

"The Priory ghost," she said quickly. "What 's that?"

"The old monk who passes through the cloisters with the sacred oil, the bell, and the smell of incense whenever any one is to die here. By Jove! it would have been a good story to tell instead of this cock-and-bull one about your property. And there *was* a death here to-day. You 'd have added the sibyl's gifts to your other charms."

"Tell me about that old man," she said, looking past him out of the window. "I was at his cottage this morning. But, no! first let us go out. You can take me for a walk, if you like. You see I am all ready, and I 'm just stifling here."

They descended to the terrace together. "Where would you like to go?" he asked.

"To the village. I may want to telegraph, you know."

They turned into the avenue, but Miss Desborough stopped.

"Is there not a shorter cut across the fields," she asked, "over there?"

"There is," said the consul.

They both turned into the footpath which led to the farm and stile. After a pause she said, "Did you ever talk with that poor old man?"

"No."

"Then you don't know if he really was crazy, as they think."

"No. But they may have thought an old man's forgetfulness of present things and his habit of communing with the past was insanity. For all that he was a plucky, independent old fellow, with a grim purpose that was certainly rational."

"I suppose in his independence he would not have taken favors from these people, or anybody?"

"I should think not."

"Don't you think it was just horrid — their leaving him alone in the rain, when he might have been only in a fit?"

"The doctor says he died suddenly of

heart disease," said the consul. "It might have happened at any moment and without warning."

"Ah, that was the coroner's verdict, then," said Miss Desborough quickly.

"The coroner did not think it necessary to have any inquest after Lord Beverdale's statement. It would n't have been very joyous for the Priory party. And I dare say he thought it might not be very cheerful for *you*."

"How very kind!" said the young girl, with a quick laugh. "But do you know that it 's about the only thing human, original, and striking that has happened in this place since I 've been here! And so unexpected, considering how comfortably everything is ordered here beforehand."

"Yet you seemed to like that kind of thing very well, last evening," said the consul mischievously.

"That was last night," retorted Miss Desborough; "and you know the line, 'Colors seen by candlelight do not look the same by day.' But I 'm going to be very consistent to-day, for I intend to go over to that poor man's cottage again, and see if I can be of any service. Will you go with me?"

"Certainly," said the consul, mystified by his companion's extraordinary conduct, yet apparent coolness of purpose, and hoping for some further explanation. Was she only an inexperienced flirt who had found herself on the point of a serious entanglement she had not contemplated? Yet even then he knew she was clever enough to extricate herself in some other way than this abrupt and brutal tearing through the meshes. Or was it possible that she really had any intelligence affecting her property? He reflected that he knew very little of the Desboroughs, but on the other hand he knew that Beverdale knew them much better, and was a prudent man. He had no right to demand her confidence as a reward for his secrecy; he must wait her pleasure. Perhaps she would still explain; women seldom could resist the triumph of telling the secret that puzzled others.

When they reached the village she halted before the low roof of Debs's cottage. "I had better go in first," she said; "you can come in later, and in the meantime you might go to the station for me and find out the exact time that the express train leaves for the north."

"But," said the astonished consul, "I thought you were going to London?"

"No," said Miss Desborough quietly, "I am going to join some friends at Harrogate."

"But that train goes much earlier than the train south, and — and I 'm afraid Lord Beverdale will not have returned so soon."

"How sad!" said Miss Desborough, with a faint smile, "but we must bear up under it, and — I 'll write him. I will be here until you return."

She turned away and entered the cottage. The granddaughter she had already seen and her sister, the servant at the Priory, were both chatting comfortably, but ceased as she entered, and both rose with awkward respect. There was little to suggest that the body of their grandfather, already in a rough oak shell, was lying upon trestles beside them.

"You have carried out my orders, I see," said Miss Desborough, laying down her parasol.

"Ay, miss; but it was main haard gettin' et döoan so soon, and et cöoast" —

"Never mind the cost. I 've given you money enough, I think, and if I have n't, I guess I can give you more."

"Ay, miss! Abbut the pa'son 'ead gi' un a funeral for nowt."

"But I understood you to say," said Miss Desborough, with an impatient flash of eye, "that your grandfather wished to be buried with his kindred in the north?"

"Ay, miss," said the girl apologetically, "an naw 'ees savit th' munny. Abbut e 'd bean tickled 'ad 'ee knowed it! Dear! dear! 'ee niver thowt et 'ud be gi'en by stranger an' not 'es ownt fammaly."

"For all that, you need n't tell anybody it was given by *me*," said Miss Desborough. "And you 'll be sure to be ready to take the train this afternoon — without delay." There was a certain peremptoriness in her voice very unlike Miss Amelyn's, yet apparently much more effective with the granddaughter.

"Ay, miss. Then, if tha 'll excoose mëa, I 'll go streight to 'oory oop sexten."

She bustled away. "Now," said Miss Desborough, turning to the other girl, "I shall take the same train, and will probably see you on the platform at York to give my final directions. That 's all. Go and see if the gentleman who came with me has returned from the station."

The girl obeyed. Left entirely alone, Miss Desborough glanced around the room, and then went quietly up to the unlidded coffin. The repose of death had softened the hard lines of the old man's mouth and brow into a resemblance she now more than ever understood. She had stood thus only a few years before, looking at the same face in a gorgeously inlaid mahogany casket, smothered amidst costly flowers, and surrounded by friends attired in all the luxurious trappings of woe; yet it was the same face that was now rigidly upturned to the bare thatch and rafters of that crumbling cottage, herself its only companion. She lifted her delicate veil with both hands, and, stooping down, kissed the hard, cold forehead, without a tremor. Then she dropped her veil again over her dry eyes, readjusted it in the little, cheap, black-framed mirror that hung against the wall, and opened the door as the granddaughter returned. The gentleman was just coming from the station.

"Remember to look out for me at York," said Miss Desborough, extending her gloved hand. "Good-by till then." The young girl respectfully touched the ends of Miss

Desborough's fingers, dropped a curtsy, and Miss Desborough rejoined the consul.

"You have barely time to return to the Priory and see to your luggage," said the consul, "if you must go. But let me hope that you have changed your mind."

"I have not changed my mind," said Miss Desborough quietly, "and my baggage is already packed." After a pause, she said thoughtfully, "I 've been wondering" —

"What?" said the consul eagerly.

"I 've been wondering if people brought up to speak in a certain dialect, where certain words have their own significance and color, and are part of their own lives and experience — if, even when they understand another dialect, they really feel any sympathy with it, or the person who speaks it?"

"Apropos of" — asked the consul.

"These people I 've just left! I don't think I quite felt with them, and I guess they did n't feel with me."

"But," said the consul laughingly, "you know that we Americans speak with a decided dialect of our own, and attach the same occult meaning to it. Yet, upon my word, I think that Lord Beverdale — or shall I say Lord Algernon? — would not only

understand that American word 'guess' as you mean it, but would perfectly sympathize with you."

Miss Desborough's eyes sparkled even through her veil as she glanced at her companion and said, "I *guess not.*"

As the "tea" party had not yet returned, it fell to the consul to accompany Miss Desborough and her maid to the station. But here he was startled to find a collection of villagers upon the platform, gathered round two young women in mourning, and an ominous-looking box. He mingled for a moment with the crowd, and then returned to Miss Desborough's side.

"Really," he said, with a concern that was scarcely assumed, "I ought not to let you go. The omens are most disastrous! You came here to a death; you are going away with a funeral!"

"Then it 's high time I took myself off!" said the lady lightly.

"Unless, like the ghostly monk, you came here on a mission, and have fulfilled it."

"Perhaps I have. Good-by!"

. . . . . .

In spite of the bright and characteristic letter which Miss Desborough left for her

host, — a letter which mingled her peculiar shrewd sense with her humorous extravagance of expression, — the consul spent a somewhat uneasy evening under the fire of questions that assailed him in reference to the fair deserter. But he kept loyal faith with her, adhering even to the letter of her instructions, and only once was goaded into more active mendacity. The conversation had turned upon "Debs," and the consul had remarked on the singularity of the name. A guest from the north observed, however, that the name was undoubtedly a contraction. "Possibly it might have been 'Debborough,' or even the same name as our fair friend."

"But didn't Miss Desborough tell you last night that she had been hunting up her people, with a family tree, or something like that?" said Lord Algernon eagerly. "I just caught a word here and there, for you were both laughing."

The consul smiled blandly. "You may well say so, for it was all the most delightful piece of pure invention and utter extravagance. It would have amused her still more if she had thought you were listening and took it seriously!"

"Of course; I see!" said the young fellow, with a laugh and a slight rise of color. "I knew she was taking some kind of a rise out of *you*, and that remark reminded me of it."

Nevertheless, within a year, Lord Algernon was happily married to the daughter of a South African millionaire, whose bridal offerings alone touched the sum of half a million. It was also said that the mother was "impossible" and the father "unspeakable," the relations "inextinguishable;" but the wedding was an "occasion," and in the succeeding year of festivity it is presumed that the names of "Debs" and "Desborough" were alike forgotten.

But they existed still in a little hamlet near the edge of a bleak northern moor, where they were singularly exalted on a soaring shaft of pure marble above the submerged and moss-grown tombstones of a simple country churchyard. So great was the contrast between the modern and pretentious monument and the graves of the humbler forefathers of the village, that even the Americans who chanced to visit it were shocked at what they believed was the ostentatious and vulgar pride of one of their own

countrywomen. For on its pedestal was inscribed: —

Sacred to the Memory
of
JOHN DEBS DESBOROUGH,
Formerly of this parish,
Who departed this life October 20th, 1892,
At Scrooby Priory,
At the age of eighty-two years.
This monument was erected as a loving testimony
by his granddaughter,
Sadie Desborough, of New York, U. S. A.

"And evening brings us home."

SALOMY JANE'S KISS

ONLY one shot had been fired. It had gone wide of its mark, — the ringleader of the Vigilantes, — and had left Red Pete, who had fired it, covered by their rifles and at their mercy. For his hand had been cramped by hard riding, and his eye distracted by their sudden onset, and so the inevitable end had come. He submitted sullenly to his captors; his companion fugitive and horse-thief gave up the protracted struggle with a feeling not unlike relief. Even the hot and revengeful victors were content. They had taken their men alive. At any time during the long chase they could have brought them down by a rifle-shot, but it would have been unsportsmanlike, and have ended in a free fight, instead of an example. And, for the matter of that, their doom was already sealed. Their end, by a rope and a tree, although not sanctified by law, would have at least the deliberation of justice. It was the tribute

paid by the Vigilantes to that order which they had themselves disregarded in the pursuit and capture. Yet this strange logic of the frontier sufficed them, and gave a certain dignity to the climax.

"Ef you 've got anything to say to your folks, say it *now*, and say it quick," said the ringleader.

Red Pete glanced around him. He had been run to earth at his own cabin in the clearing, whence a few relations and friends, mostly women and children, non-combatants, had outflowed, gazing vacantly at the twenty Vigilantes who surrounded them. All were accustomed to scenes of violence, blood-feud, chase, and hardship; it was only the suddenness of the onset and its quick result that had surprised them. They looked on with dazed curiosity and some disappointment; there had been no fight to speak of —no spectacle! A boy, nephew of Red Pete, got upon the rain-barrel to view the proceedings more comfortably; a tall, handsome, lazy Kentucky girl, a visiting neighbor, leaned against the doorpost, chewing gum. Only a yellow hound was actively perplexed. He could not make out if a hunt were just over or beginning, and ran

eagerly backwards and forwards, leaping alternately upon the captives and the captors.

The ringleader repeated his challenge. Red Pete gave a reckless laugh and looked at his wife.

At which Mrs. Red Pete came forward. It seemed that she had much to say, incoherently, furiously, vindictively, to the ringleader. His soul would roast in hell for that day's work! He called himself a man, skunkin' in the open and afraid to show himself except with a crowd of other "Ki-yi's" around a house of women and children. Heaping insult upon insult, inveighing against his low blood, his ancestors, his dubious origin, she at last flung out a wild taunt of his invalid wife, the insult of a woman to a woman, until his white face grew rigid, and only that Western-American fetich of the sanctity of sex kept his twitching fingers from the lock of his rifle. Even her husband noticed it, and with a half-authoritative "Let up on that, old gal," and a pat of his freed left hand on her back, took his last parting. The ringleader, still white under the lash of the woman's tongue, turned abruptly to the second cap-

tive. "And if *you*'ve got anybody to say 'good-by' to, now 's your chance."

The man looked up. Nobody stirred or spoke. He was a stranger there, being a chance confederate picked up by Red Pete, and known to no one. Still young, but an outlaw from his abandoned boyhood, of which father and mother were only a forgotten dream, he loved horses and stole them, fully accepting the frontier penalty of life for the interference with that animal on which a man's life so often depended. But he understood the good points of a horse, as was shown by the one he bestrode — until a few days before the property of Judge Boompointer. This was his sole distinction.

The unexpected question stirred him for a moment out of the attitude of reckless indifference, for attitude it was, and a part of his profession. But it may have touched him that at that moment he was less than his companion and his virago wife. However, he only shook his head. As he did so his eye casually fell on the handsome girl by the doorpost, who was looking at him. The ringleader, too, may have been touched by his complete loneliness, for *he* hesitated. At the same moment he saw that the girl was looking at his friendless captive.

A grotesque idea struck him.

"Salomy Jane, ye might do worse than come yere and say 'good-by' to a dying man, and him a stranger," he said.

There seemed to be a subtle stroke of poetry and irony in this that equally struck the apathetic crowd. It was well known that Salomy Jane Clay thought no small potatoes of herself, and always held off the local swain with a lazy nymph-like scorn. Nevertheless, she slowly disengaged herself from the doorpost, and, to everybody's astonishment, lounged with languid grace and outstretched hand towards the prisoner. The color came into the gray reckless mask which the doomed man wore as her right hand grasped his left, just loosed by his captors. Then she paused; her shy, fawn-like eyes grew bold, and fixed themselves upon him. She took the chewing-gum from her mouth, wiped her red lips with the back of her hand, by a sudden lithe spring placed her foot on his stirrup, and, bounding to the saddle, threw her arms about his neck and pressed a kiss upon his lips.

They remained thus for a hushed moment — the man on the threshold of death, the young woman in the fullness of youth and

beauty — linked together. Then the crowd laughed; in the audacious effrontery of the girl's act the ultimate fate of the two men was forgotten. She slipped languidly to the ground; *she* was the focus of all eyes, — she only! The ringleader saw it and his opportunity. He shouted: "Time 's up — Forward!" urged his horse beside his captives, and the next moment the whole cavalcade was sweeping over the clearing into the darkening woods.

Their destination was Sawyer's Crossing, the headquarters of the committee, where the council was still sitting, and where both culprits were to expiate the offense of which that council had already found them guilty. They rode in great and breathless haste, — a haste in which, strangely enough, even the captives seemed to join. That haste possibly prevented them from noticing the singular change which had taken place in the second captive since the episode of the kiss. His high color remained, as if it had burned through his mask of indifference; his eyes were quick, alert, and keen, his mouth half open as if the girl's kiss still lingered there. And that haste had made them careless, for the horse of the man who

led him slipped in a gopher-hole, rolled over, unseated his rider, and even dragged the bound and helpless second captive from Judge Boompointer's favorite mare. In an instant they were all on their feet again, but in that supreme moment the second captive felt the cords which bound his arms had slipped to his wrists. By keeping his elbows to his sides, and obliging the others to help him mount, it escaped their notice. By riding close to his captors, and keeping in the crush of the throng, he further concealed the accident, slowly working his hands downwards out of his bonds.

Their way lay through a sylvan wilderness, mid-leg deep in ferns, whose tall fronds brushed their horses' sides in their furious gallop and concealed the flapping of the captive's loosened cords. The peaceful vista, more suggestive of the offerings of nymph and shepherd than of human sacrifice, was in a strange contrast to this whirlwind rush of stern, armed men. The westering sun pierced the subdued light and the tremor of leaves with yellow lances; birds started into song on blue and dove-like wings, and on either side of the trail of this vengeful storm could be heard the murmur of hidden and

tranquil waters. In a few moments they would be on the open ridge, whence sloped the common turnpike to "Sawyer's," a mile away. It was the custom of returning cavalcades to take this hill at headlong speed, with shouts and cries that heralded their coming. They withheld the latter that day, as inconsistent with their dignity; but, emerging from the wood, swept silently like an avalanche down the slope. They were well under way, looking only to their horses, when the second captive slipped his right arm from the bonds and succeeded in grasping the reins that lay trailing on the horse's neck. A sudden *vaquero* jerk, which the well-trained animal understood, threw him on his haunches with his forelegs firmly planted on the slope. The rest of the cavalcade swept on; the man who was leading the captive's horse by the *riata*, thinking only of another accident, dropped the line to save himself from being dragged backwards from his horse. The captive wheeled, and the next moment was galloping furiously up the slope.

It was the work of a moment; a trained horse and an experienced hand. The cavalcade had covered nearly fifty yards before

they could pull up; the freed captive had covered half that distance uphill. The road was so narrow that only two shots could be fired, and these broke dust two yards ahead of the fugitive. They had not dared to fire low; the horse was the more valuable animal. The fugitive knew this in his extremity also, and would have gladly taken a shot in his own leg to spare that of his horse. Five men were detached to recapture or kill him. The latter seemed inevitable. But he had calculated his chances; before they could reload he had reached the woods again; winding in and out between the pillared tree trunks, he offered no mark. They knew his horse was superior to their own; at the end of two hours they returned, for he had disappeared without track or trail. The end was briefly told in the "Sierra Record:"—

"Red Pete, the notorious horse-thief, who had so long eluded justice, was captured and hung by the Sawyer's Crossing Vigilantes last week; his confederate, unfortunately, escaped on a valuable horse belonging to Judge Boompointer. The judge had refused one thousand dollars for the horse only a week before. As the thief, who is

still at large, would find it difficult to dispose of so valuable an animal without detection, the chances are against either of them turning up again."

. . . . . .

Salomy Jane watched the cavalcade until it had disappeared. Then she became aware that her brief popularity had passed. Mrs. Red Pete, in stormy hysterics, had included her in a sweeping denunciation of the whole universe, possibly for simulating an emotion in which she herself was deficient. The other women hated her for her momentary exaltation above them; only the children still admired her as one who had undoubtedly "canoodled" with a man "a-going to be hung" — a daring flight beyond their wildest ambition. Salomy Jane accepted the change with charming unconcern. She put on her yellow nankeen sunbonnet, — a hideous affair that would have ruined any other woman, but which only enhanced the piquancy of her fresh brunette skin, — tied the strings, letting the blue-black braids escape below its frilled curtain behind, jumped on her mustang with a casual display of agile ankles in shapely white stockings, whistled to the hound, and waving her hand with a

"So long, sonny!" to the lately bereft but admiring nephew, flapped and fluttered away in her short brown holland gown.

Her father's house was four miles distant. Contrasted with the cabin she had just quitted, it was a superior dwelling, with a long "lean-to" at the rear, which brought the eaves almost to the ground and made it look like a low triangle. It had a long barn and cattle sheds, for Madison Clay was a "great" stock-raiser and the owner of a "quarter section." It had a sitting-room and a parlor organ, whose transportation thither had been a marvel of "packing." These things were supposed to give Salomy Jane an undue importance, but the girl's reserve and inaccessibility to local advances were rather the result of a cool, lazy temperament and the preoccupation of a large, protecting admiration for her father, for some years a widower. For Mr. Madison Clay's life had been threatened in one or two feuds, — it was said, not without cause, — and it is possible that the pathetic spectacle of her father doing his visiting with a shotgun may have touched her closely and somewhat prejudiced her against the neighboring masculinity. The thought that cattle, horses, and "quar-

ter section" would one day be hers did not disturb her calm. As for Mr. Clay, he accepted her as housewifely, though somewhat "interfering," and, being one of "his own womankind," therefore not without some degree of merit.

"Wot 's this yer I 'm hearin' of your doin's over at Red Pete's? Honeyfoglin' with a horse-thief, eh?" said Mr. Clay two days later at breakfast.

"I reckon you heard about the straight thing, then," said Salomy Jane unconcernedly, without looking round.

"What do you kalkilate Rube will say to it? What are you goin' to tell *him?*" said Mr. Clay sarcastically.

"Rube," or Reuben Waters, was a swain supposed to be favored particularly by Mr. Clay. Salomy Jane looked up.

"I 'll tell him that when *he* 's on his way to be hung, I 'll kiss him, — not till then," said the young lady brightly.

This delightful witticism suited the paternal humor, and Mr. Clay smiled; but, nevertheless, he frowned a moment afterwards.

"But this yer hoss-thief got away arter all, and that 's a hoss of a different color," he said grimly.

Salomy Jane put down her knife and fork. This was certainly a new and different phase of the situation. She had never thought of it before, and, strangely enough, for the first time she became interested in the man. "Got away?" she repeated. "Did they let him off?"

"Not much," said her father briefly. "Slipped his cords, and going down the grade pulled up short, just like a *vaquero* agin a lassoed bull, almost draggin' the man leadin' him off his hoss, and then skyuted up the grade. For that matter, on that hoss o' Judge Boompointer's he mout have dragged the whole posse of 'em down on their knees ef he liked! Sarved 'em right, too. Instead of stringin' him up afore the door, or shootin' him on sight, they must allow to take him down afore the hull committee 'for an example.' 'Example' be blowed! Ther' 's example enough when some stranger comes unbeknownst slap onter a man hanged to a tree and plugged full of holes. *That* 's an example, and *he* knows what it means. Wot more do ye want? But then those Vigilantes is allus clingin' and hangin' onter some mere scrap o' the law they 're pretendin' to despise. It

makes me sick! Why, when Jake Myers shot your ole Aunt Viney's second husband, and I laid in wait for Jake afterwards in the Butternut Hollow, did *I* tie him to his hoss and fetch him down to your Aunt Viney's cabin 'for an example' before I plugged him? No!" in deep disgust. "No! Why, I just meandered through the wood, careless-like, till he comes out, and I just rode up to him, and I said" —

But Salomy Jane had heard her father's story before. Even one's dearest relatives are apt to become tiresome in narration. "I know, dad," she interrupted; "but this yer man, — this hoss-thief, — did *he* get clean away without gettin' hurt at all?"

"He did, and unless he 's fool enough to sell the hoss he kin keep away, too. So ye see, ye can't ladle out purp stuff about a 'dyin' stranger' to Rube. He won't swaller it."

"All the same, dad," returned the girl cheerfully, "I reckon to say it, and say *more;* I 'll tell him that ef *he* manages to get away too, I 'll marry him — there! But ye don't ketch Rube takin' any such risks in gettin' ketched, or in gettin' away arter!"

Madison Clay smiled grimly, pushed back

his chair, rose, dropped a perfunctory kiss on his daughter's hair, and, taking his shotgun from the corner, departed on a peaceful Samaritan mission to a cow who had dropped a calf in the far pasture. Inclined as he was to Reuben's wooing from his eligibility as to property, he was conscious that he was sadly deficient in certain qualities inherent in the Clay family. It certainly would be a kind of *mésalliance*.

Left to herself, Salomy Jane stared a long while at the coffee-pot, and then called the two squaws who assisted her in her household duties, to clear away the things while she went up to her own room to make her bed. Here she was confronted with a possible prospect of that proverbial bed she might be making in her willfulness, and on which she must lie, in the photograph of a somewhat serious young man of refined features — Reuben Waters — stuck in her window-frame. Salomy Jane smiled over her last witticism regarding him and enjoyed it, like your true humorist, and then, catching sight of her own handsome face in the little mirror, smiled again. But was n't it funny about that horse-thief getting off after all? Good Lordy! Fancy Reuben hearing he

was alive and going round with that kiss of hers set on his lips! She laughed again, a little more abstractedly. And he had returned it like a man, holding her tight and almost breathless, and he going to be hung the next minute! Salomy Jane had been kissed at other times, by force, chance, or stratagem. In a certain ingenuous forfeit game of the locality known as "I 'm a-pinin'," many had "pined" for a "sweet kiss" from Salomy Jane, which she had yielded in a sense of honor and fair play. She had never been kissed like this before — she would never again; and yet the man was alive! And behold, she could see in the mirror that she was blushing!

She should hardly know him again. A young man with very bright eyes, a flushed and sunburnt cheek, a kind of fixed look in the face, and no beard; no, none that she could feel. Yet he was not at all like Reuben, not a bit. She took Reuben's picture from the window, and laid it on her workbox. And to think she did not even know this young man's name! That was queer. To be kissed by a man whom she might never know! Of course he knew hers. She wondered if he remembered it and her. But

of course he was so glad to get off with his life that he never thought of anything else. Yet she did not give more than four or five minutes to these speculations, and, like a sensible girl, thought of something else. Once again, however, in opening the closet, she found the brown holland gown she had worn on the day before; thought it very unbecoming, and regretted that she had not worn her best gown on her visit to Red Pete's cottage. On such an occasion she really might have been more impressive.

When her father came home that night she asked him the news. No, they had *not* captured the second horse-thief, who was still at large. Judge Boompointer talked of invoking the aid of the despised law. It remained, then, to see whether the horse-thief was fool enough to try to get rid of the animal. Red Pete's body had been delivered to his widow. Perhaps it would only be neighborly for Salomy Jane to ride over to the funeral. But Salomy Jane did not take to the suggestion kindly, nor yet did she explain to her father that, as the other man was still living, she did not care to undergo a second disciplining at the widow's hands. Nevertheless, she contrasted her situation

with that of the widow with a new and singular satisfaction. It might have been Red Pete who had escaped. But he had not the grit of the nameless one. She had already settled his heroic quality.

"Ye ain't harkenin' to me, Salomy."

Salomy Jane started.

"Here I 'm askin' ye if ye 've see that hound Phil Larrabee sneaking by yer to-day?"

Salomy Jane had not. But she became interested and self-reproachful, for she knew that Phil Larrabee was one of her father's enemies. "He would n't dare to go by here unless he knew you were out," she said quickly.

"That 's what gets me," he said, scratching his grizzled head. "I 've been kind o' thinkin' o' him all day, and one of them Chinamen said he saw him at Sawyer's Crossing. He was a kind of friend o' Pete's wife. That 's why I thought yer might find out ef he 'd been there." Salomy Jane grew more self-reproachful at her father's self-interest in her "neighborliness." "But that ain't all," continued Mr. Clay. "Thar was tracks over the far pasture that warn't mine. I followed them, and they went round and

round the house two or three times, ez ef they mout hev bin prowlin', and then I lost 'em in the woods again. It 's just like that sneakin' hound Larrabee to hev bin lyin' in wait for me and afraid to meet a man fair and square in the open."

"You just lie low, dad, for a day or two more, and let me do a little prowlin'," said the girl, with sympathetic indignation in her dark eyes. "Ef it 's that skunk, I 'll spot him soon enough and let you know whar he 's hiding."

"You 'll just stay where ye are, Salomy," said her father decisively. "This ain't no woman's work — though I ain't sayin' you have n't got more head for it than some men I know."

Nevertheless, that night, after her father had gone to bed, Salomy Jane sat by the open window of the sitting-room in an apparent attitude of languid contemplation, but alert and intent of eye and ear. It was a fine moonlit night. Two pines near the door, solitary pickets of the serried ranks of distant forest, cast long shadows like paths to the cottage, and sighed their spiced breath in the windows. For there was no frivolity of vine or flower round Salomy Jane's

bower. The clearing was too recent, the life too practical for vanities like these. But the moon added a vague elusiveness to everything, softened the rigid outlines of the sheds, gave shadows to the lidless windows, and touched with merciful indirectness the hideous débris of refuse gravel and the gaunt scars of burnt vegetation before the door. Even Salomy Jane was affected by it, and exhaled something between a sigh and a yawn with the breath of the pines. Then she suddenly sat upright.

Her quick ear had caught a faint "click, click," in the direction of the wood; her quicker instinct and rustic training enabled her to determine that it was the ring of a horse's shoe on flinty ground; her knowledge of the locality told her it came from the spot where the trail passed over an outcrop of flint scarcely a quarter of a mile from where she sat, and within the clearing. It was no errant "stock," for the foot was *shod* with iron; it was a mounted trespasser by night, and boded no good to a man like Clay.

She rose, threw her shawl over her head, more for disguise than shelter, and passed out of the door. A sudden impulse made

her seize her father's shotgun from the corner where it stood, — not that she feared any danger to herself, but that it was an excuse. She made directly for the wood, keeping in the shadow of the pines as long as she could. At the fringe she halted; whoever was there must pass her before reaching the house.

Then there seemed to be a suspense of all nature. Everything was deadly still — even the moonbeams appeared no longer tremulous; soon there was a rustle as of some stealthy animal among the ferns, and then a dismounted man stepped into the moonlight. It was the horse-thief — the man she had kissed!

For a wild moment a strange fancy seized her usually sane intellect and stirred her temperate blood. The news they had told her was *not* true; he had been hung, and this was his ghost! He looked as white and spirit-like in the moonlight, dressed in the same clothes, as when she saw him last. He had evidently seen her approaching, and moved quickly to meet her. But in his haste he stumbled slightly; she reflected suddenly that ghosts did not stumble, and a feeling of relief came over her. And it was no assassin of her father that had been prowl-

ing around — only this unhappy fugitive. A momentary color came into her cheek; her coolness and hardihood returned; it was with a tinge of sauciness in her voice that she said: —

"I reckoned you were a ghost."

"I mout have been," he said, looking at her fixedly; "but I reckon I 'd have come back here all the same."

"It 's a little riskier comin' back alive," she said, with a levity that died on her lips, for a singular nervousness, half fear and half expectation, was beginning to take the place of her relief of a moment ago. "Then it was *you* who was prowlin' round and makin' tracks in the far pasture?"

"Yes; I came straight here when I got away."

She felt his eyes were burning her, but did not dare to raise her own. "Why," she began, hesitated, and ended vaguely. "*How* did you get here?"

"You helped me!"

"I?"

"Yes. That kiss you gave me put life into me — gave me strength to get away. I swore to myself I 'd come back and thank you, alive or dead."

Every word he said she could have anticipated, so plain the situation seemed to her now. And every word he said she knew was the truth. Yet her cool common sense struggled against it.

"What 's the use of your escaping, ef you 're comin' back here to be ketched again?" she said pertly.

He drew a little nearer to her, but seemed to her the more awkward as she resumed her self-possession. His voice, too, was broken, as if by exhaustion, as he said, catching his breath at intervals: —

"I 'll tell you. You did more for me than you think. You made another man o' me. I never had a man, woman, or child do to me what you did. I never had a friend — only a pal like Red Pete, who picked me up 'on shares.' I want to quit this yer — what I 'm doin'. I want to begin by doin' the square thing to you" — He stopped, breathed hard, and then said brokenly, "My hoss is over thar, staked out. I want to give him to you. Judge Boompointer will give you a thousand dollars for him. I ain't lyin'; it 's God's truth! I saw it on the handbill agin a tree. Take him, and I 'll get away afoot. Take him. It 's the

only thing I can do for you, and I know it don't half pay for what you did. Take it; your father can get a reward for you, if you can't."

Such were the ethics of this strange locality that neither the man who made the offer nor the girl to whom it was made was struck by anything that seemed illogical or indelicate, or at all inconsistent with justice or the horse-thief's real conversion. Salomy Jane nevertheless dissented, from another and weaker reason.

"I don't want your hoss, though I reckon dad might; but you 're just starvin'. I 'll get suthin'." She turned towards the house.

"Say you 'll take the hoss first," he said, grasping her hand. At the touch she felt herself coloring and struggled, expecting perhaps another kiss. But he dropped her hand. She turned again with a saucy gesture, said, "Hol' on; I 'll come right back," and slipped away, the mere shadow of a coy and flying nymph in the moonlight, until she reached the house.

Here she not only procured food and whiskey, but added a long dust-coat and hat of her father's to her burden. They would serve as a disguise for him and hide that

heroic figure, which she thought everybody must now know as she did. Then she rejoined him breathlessly. But he put the food and whiskey aside.

"Listen," he said; "I 've turned the hoss into your corral. You 'll find him there in the morning, and no one will know but that he got lost and joined the other hosses."

Then she burst out. "But you — *you* — what will become of you? You 'll be ketched!"

"I 'll manage to get away," he said in a low voice, "ef — ef" —

"Ef what?" she said tremblingly.

"Ef you 'll put the heart in me again, — as you did!" he gasped.

She tried to laugh — to move away. She could do neither. Suddenly he caught her in his arms, with a long kiss, which she returned again and again. Then they stood embraced as they had embraced two days before, but no longer the same. For the cool, lazy Salomy Jane had been transformed into another woman — a passionate, clinging savage. Perhaps something of her father's blood had surged within her at that supreme moment. The man stood erect and determined.

"Wot 's your name?" she whispered quickly. It was a woman's quickest way of defining her feelings.

"Dart."

"Yer first name?"

"Jack."

"Let me go now, Jack. Lie low in the woods till to-morrow sunup. I 'll come again."

He released her. Yet she lingered a moment. "Put on those things," she said, with a sudden happy flash of eyes and teeth, "and lie close till I come." And then she sped away home.

But midway up the distance she felt her feet going slower, and something at her heartstrings seemed to be pulling her back. She stopped, turned, and glanced to where he had been standing. Had she seen him then, she might have returned. But he had disappeared. She gave her first sigh, and then ran quickly again. It must be nearly ten o'clock! It was not very long to morning!

She was within a few steps of her own door, when the sleeping woods and silent air appeared to suddenly awake with a sharp "crack!"

She stopped, paralyzed. Another "crack!" followed, that echoed over to the far corral. She recalled herself instantly and dashed off wildly to the woods again.

As she ran she thought of one thing only. He had been "dogged" by one of his old pursuers and attacked. But there were two shots, and he was unarmed. Suddenly she remembered that she had left her father's gun standing against the tree where they were talking. Thank God! she may again have saved him. She ran to the tree; the gun was gone. She ran hither and thither, dreading at every step to fall upon his lifeless body. A new thought struck her; she ran to the corral. The horse was not there! He must have been able to regain it, and escaped, *after* the shots had been fired. She drew a long breath of relief, but it was caught up in an apprehension of alarm. Her father, awakened from his sleep by the shots, was hurriedly approaching her.

"What 's up now, Salomy Jane?" he demanded excitedly.

"Nothin'," said the girl with an effort. "Nothin', at least, that *I* can find." She was usually truthful because fearless, and a lie stuck in her throat; but she was no

longer fearless, thinking of *him*. "I was n't abed; so I ran out as soon as I heard the shots fired," she answered in return to his curious gaze.

"And you 've hid my gun somewhere where it can't be found," he said reproachfully. "Ef it was that sneak Larrabee, and he fired them shots to lure me out, he might have potted me, without a show, a dozen times in the last five minutes."

She had not thought since of her father's enemy! It might indeed have been he who had attacked Jack. But she made a quick point of the suggestion. "Run in, dad, run in and find the gun; you 've got no show out here without it." She seized him by the shoulders from behind, shielding him from the woods, and hurried him, half expostulating, half struggling, to the house.

But there no gun was to be found. It was strange; it must have been mislaid in some corner! Was he sure he had not left it in the barn? But no matter now. The danger was over; the Larrabee trick had failed; he must go to bed now, and in the morning they would make a search together. At the same time she had inwardly resolved to rise before him and make another search

of the wood, and perhaps — fearful joy as she recalled her promise! — find Jack alive and well, awaiting her!

Salomy Jane slept little that night, nor did her father. But towards morning he fell into a tired man's slumber until the sun was well up the horizon. Far different was it with his daughter: she lay with her face to the window, her head half lifted to catch every sound, from the creaking of the sun-warped shingles above her head to the far-off moan of the rising wind in the pine trees. Sometimes she fell into a breathless, half-ecstatic trance, living over every moment of the stolen interview; feeling the fugitive's arm still around her, his kisses on her lips; hearing his whispered voice in her ears — the birth of her new life! This was followed again by a period of agonizing dread — that he might even then be lying, his life ebbing away, in the woods, with her name on his lips, and she resting here inactive, until she half started from her bed to go to his succor. And this went on until a pale opal glow came into the sky, followed by a still paler pink on the summit of the white Sierras, when she rose and hurriedly began to dress. Still so sanguine was her hope of

meeting him, that she lingered yet a moment to select the brown holland skirt and yellow sunbonnet she had worn when she first saw him. And she had only seen him twice! Only *twice!* It would be cruel, too cruel, not to see him again!

She crept softly down the stairs, listening to the long-drawn breathing of her father in his bedroom, and then, by the light of a guttering candle, scrawled a note to him, begging him not to trust himself out of the house until she returned from her search, and leaving the note open on the table, swiftly ran out into the growing day.

Three hours afterwards Mr. Madison Clay awoke to the sound of loud knocking. At first this forced itself upon his consciousness as his daughter's regular morning summons, and was responded to by a grunt of recognition and a nestling closer in the blankets. Then he awoke with a start and a muttered oath, remembering the events of last night, and his intention to get up early, and rolled out of bed. Becoming aware by this time that the knocking was at the outer door, and hearing the shout of a familiar voice, he hastily pulled on his boots, his jean trousers, and fastening a single sus-

pender over his shoulder as he clattered downstairs, stood in the lower room. The door was open, and waiting upon the threshold was his kinsman, an old ally in many a blood-feud — Breckenridge Clay!

"You *are* a cool one, Mad!" said the latter in half-admiring indignation.

"What 's up?" said the bewildered Madison.

"*You* ought to be, and scootin' out o' this," said Breckenridge grimly. "It 's all very well to 'know nothin';' but here Phil Larrabee's friends hev just picked him up, drilled through with slugs and deader nor a crow, and now they 're lettin' loose Larrabee's two half-brothers on you. And you must go like a derned fool and leave these yer things behind you in the bresh," he went on querulously, lifting Madison Clay's dust-coat, hat, and shotgun from his horse, which stood saddled at the door. "Luckily I picked them up in the woods comin' here. Ye ain't got more than time to get over the state line and among your folks thar afore they 'll be down on you. Hustle, old man! What are you gawkin' and starin' at?"

Madison Clay had stared amazed and bewildered — horror-stricken. The incidents

of the past night for the first time flashed upon him clearly — hopelessly! The shot; his finding Salomy Jane alone in the woods; her confusion and anxiety to rid herself of him; the disappearance of the shotgun; and now this new discovery of the taking of his hat and coat for a disguise! *She* had killed Phil Larrabee in that disguise, after provoking his first harmless shot! She, his own child, Salomy Jane, had disgraced herself by a man's crime; had disgraced him by usurping his right, and taking a mean advantage, by deceit, of a foe!

"Gimme that gun," he said hoarsely.

Breckenridge handed him the gun in wonder and slowly gathering suspicion. Madison examined nipple and muzzle; one barrel had been discharged. It was true! The gun dropped from his hand.

"Look here, old man," said Breckenridge, with a darkening face, "there 's bin no foul play here. Thar 's bin no hiring of men, no deputy to do this job. *You* did it fair and square — yourself?"

"Yes, by God!" burst out Madison Clay in a hoarse voice. "Who says I did n't?"

Reassured, yet believing that Madison Clay had nerved himself for the act by an

over-draught of whiskey, which had affected his memory, Breckenridge said curtly, "Then wake up and 'lite' out, ef ye want me to stand by you."

"Go to the corral and pick me out a hoss," said Madison slowly, yet not without a certain dignity of manner. "I 've suthin' to say to Salomy Jane afore I go." He was holding her scribbled note, which he had just discovered, in his shaking hand.

Struck by his kinsman's manner, and knowing the dependent relations of father and daughter, Breckenridge nodded and hurried away. Left to himself, Madison Clay ran his fingers through his hair, and straightened out the paper on which Salomy Jane had scrawled her note, turned it over, and wrote on the back: —

You might have told me you did it, and not leave your ole father to find it out how you disgraced yourself and him, too, by a low-down, underhanded, woman's trick! I 've said I done it, and took the blame myself, and all the sneakiness of it that folks suspect. If I get away alive — and I don't care much which — you need n't foller. The house and stock are yours; but you ain't

any longer the daughter of your disgraced father, MADISON CLAY.

He had scarcely finished the note when, with a clatter of hoofs and a led horse, Breckenridge reappeared at the door elate and triumphant. "You 're in nigger luck, Mad! I found that stole hoss of Judge Boompointer's had got away and strayed among your stock in the corral. Take him and you 're safe; he can't be outrun this side of the state line."

"I ain't no hoss-thief," said Madison grimly.

"Nobody sez ye are, but you 'd be wuss — a fool — ef you did n't take him. I 'm testimony that you found him among your hosses; I 'll tell Judge Boompointer you 've got him, and ye kin send him back when you 're safe. The judge will be mighty glad to get him back, and call it quits. So ef you 've writ to Salomy Jane, come."

Madison Clay no longer hesitated. Salomy Jane might return at any moment, — it would be part of her "fool womanishness," — and he was in no mood to see her before a third party. He laid the note on the table, gave a hurried glance around the

house, which he grimly believed he was leaving forever, and, striding to the door, leaped on the stolen horse, and swept away with his kinsman.

But that note lay for a week undisturbed on the table in full view of the open door. The house was invaded by leaves, pine cones, birds, and squirrels during the hot, silent, empty days, and at night by shy, stealthy creatures, but never again, day or night, by any of the Clay family. It was known in the district that Clay had flown across the state line, his daughter was believed to have joined him the next day, and the house was supposed to be locked up. It lay off the main road, and few passed that way. The starving cattle in the corral at last broke bounds and spread over the woods. And one night a stronger blast than usual swept through the house, carried the note from the table to the floor, where, whirled into a crack in the flooring, it slowly rotted.

But though the sting of her father's reproach was spared her, Salomy Jane had no need of the letter to know what had happened. For as she entered the woods in the dim light of that morning she saw the figure of Dart gliding from the shadow of a pine

towards her. The unaffected cry of joy that rose from her lips died there as she caught sight of his face in the open light.

"You are hurt," she said, clutching his arm passionately.

"No," he said. "But I would n't mind that if" —

"You 're thinkin' I was afeard to come back last night when I heard the shootin', but I *did* come," she went on feverishly. "I ran back here when I heard the two shots, but you were gone. I went to the corral, but your hoss was n't there, and I thought you 'd got away."

"I *did* get away," said Dart gloomily. "I killed the man, thinkin' he was huntin' *me*, and forgettin' I was disguised. He thought I was your father."

"Yes," said the girl joyfully, "he was after dad, and *you* — you killed him." She again caught his hand admiringly.

But he did not respond. Possibly there were points of honor which this horse-thief felt vaguely with her father. "Listen," he said grimly. "Others think it was your father killed him. When *I* did it — for he fired at me first — I ran to the corral again and took my hoss, thinkin' I might be fol-

lered. I made a clear circuit of the house, and when I found he was the only one, and no one was follerin', I come back here and took off my disguise. Then I heard his friends find him in the wood, and I know they suspected your father. And then another man come through the woods while I was hidin' and found the clothes and took them away." He stopped and stared at her gloomily.

But all this was unintelligible to the girl. "Dad would have got the better of him ef you had n't," she said eagerly, "so what 's the difference?"

"All the same," he said gloomily, "I must take his place."

She did not understand, but turned her head to her master. "Then you 'll go back with me and tell him *all?*" she said obediently.

"Yes," he said.

She put her hand in his, and they crept out of the wood together. She foresaw a thousand difficulties, but, chiefest of all, that he did not love as she did. *She* would not have taken these risks against their happiness.

But alas for ethics and heroism. As

they were issuing from the wood they heard the sound of galloping hoofs, and had barely time to hide themselves before Madison Clay, on the stolen horse of Judge Boompointer, swept past them with his kinsman.

Salomy Jane turned to her lover.

. . . . . .

And here I might, as a moral romancer, pause, leaving the guilty, passionate girl eloped with her disreputable lover, destined to lifelong shame and misery, misunderstood to the last by a criminal, fastidious parent. But I am confronted by certain facts, on which this romance is based. A month later a handbill was posted on one of the sentinel pines, announcing that the property would be sold by auction to the highest bidder by Mrs. John Dart, daughter of Madison Clay, Esq., and it was sold accordingly. Still later — by ten years — the chronicler of these pages visited a certain "stock" or "breeding farm," in the "Blue Grass Country," famous for the popular racers it has produced. He was told that the owner was the "best judge of horse-flesh in the country." "Small wonder," added his informant, "for they say as a young man out in California he was a horse-thief, and only saved himself

by eloping with some rich farmer's daughter. But he 's a straight-out and respectable man now, whose word about horses can't be bought; and as for his wife, *she* 's a beauty! To see her at the ' Springs,' rigged out in the latest fashion, you 'd never think she had ever lived out of New York or was n't the wife of one of its millionaires."

THE MAN AND THE MOUNTAIN

He was such a large, strong man that, when he first set foot in the little parallelogram I called my garden, it seemed to shrink to half its size and become preposterous. But I noticed at the same time that he was holding in the open palm of his huge hand the roots of a violet, with such infinite tenderness and delicacy that I would have engaged him as my gardener on the spot. But this could not be, as he was already the proud proprietor of a market-garden and nursery on the outskirts of the suburban Californian town where I lived. He would, however, come for two days in the week, stock and look after my garden, and impart to my urban intellect such horticultural hints as were necessary. His name was "Rütli," which I presumed to be German, but which my neighbors rendered as "Rootleigh," possibly from some vague connection with his occupation. His own knowledge of English was oral and phonetic. I have

a delightful recollection of a bill of his in which I was charged for "fioletz," with the vague addition of "maine cains." Subsequent explanation proved it to be "many kinds."

Nevertheless, my little garden bourgeoned and blossomed under his large, protecting hand. I became accustomed to walk around his feet respectfully when they blocked the tiny paths, and to expect the total eclipse of that garden-bed on which he worked, by his huge bulk. For the tiniest and most reluctant rootlet seemed to respond to his caressing paternal touch; it was a pretty sight to see his huge fingers tying up some slender stalk to its stick with the smallest thread, and he had a reverent way of laying a bulb or seed in the ground, and then gently shaping and smoothing a small mound over it, which made the little inscription on the stick above more like an affecting epitaph than ever. Much of this gentleness may have been that apology for his great strength, common with large men; but his face was distinctly amiable, and his very light blue eyes were at times wistful and doglike in their kindliness. I was soon to learn, however, that placability was not entirely his nature.

The garden was part of a fifty *vara* lot of land, on which I was simultaneously erecting a house. But the garden was finished before the house was, through certain circumstances very characteristic of that epoch and civilization. I had purchased the Spanish title, the only *legal* one, to the land, which, however, had been in *possession* of a "squatter." But he had been unable to hold that possession against a "jumper," — another kind of squatter who had entered upon it covertly, fenced it in, and marked it out in building sites. Neither having legal rights, they could not invoke the law; the last man held possession. There was no doubt that in due course of litigation and time both these ingenuous gentlemen would have been dispossessed in favor of the real owner, — myself, — but that course would be a protracted one. Following the usual custom of the locality, I paid a certain sum to the jumper to yield up peaceably *his* possession of the land, and began to build upon it. It might be reasonably supposed that the question was settled. But it was not. The house was nearly finished when, one morning, I was called out of my editorial sanctum by a pallid painter, looking even more white-

leaded than usual, who informed me that my house was in the possession of five armed men! The entry had been made peaceably during the painters' absence to dinner under a wayside tree. When they returned, they had found their pots and brushes in the road, and an intimation from the windows that their reëntrance would be forcibly resisted as a trespass.

I honestly believe that Rütli was more concerned than myself over this dispossession. While he loyally believed that I would get back my property, he was dreadfully grieved over the inevitable damage that would be done to the garden during this interval of neglect and carelessness. I even think he would have made a truce with my enemies, if they would only have let him look after his beloved plants. As it was, he kept a passing but melancholy surveillance of them, and was indeed a better spy of the actions of the intruders than any I could have employed. One day, to my astonishment, he brought me a moss-rose bud from a bush which had been trained against a column of the veranda. It appeared that he had called, from over the fence, the attention of one of the men to the neglected

condition of the plant, and had obtained permission to "come in and tie it up." The men, being merely hirelings of the chief squatter, had no personal feeling, and I was not therefore surprised to hear that they presently allowed Rütli to come in occasionally and look after his precious "slips." If they had any suspicions of his great strength, it was probably offset by his peaceful avocation and his bland, childlike face. Meantime, I had begun the usual useless legal proceeding, but had also engaged a few rascals of my own to be ready to take advantage of any want of vigilance on the part of my adversaries. I never thought of Rütli in that connection any more than they had.

A few Sundays later I was sitting in the little tea-arbor of Rütli's nursery, peacefully smoking with him. Presently he took his long china-bowled pipe from his mouth, and, looking at me blandly over his yellow mustache, said: —

"You vonts sometimes to go in dot house, eh?"

I said, "Decidedly."

"Mit a revolver, and keep dot house dose men out?"

"Yes!"

"Vell! I put you in dot house--today!"

"Sunday?"

"Shoost so! It is a goot day! On der Suntay *dree* men vill out go to valk mit demselluffs, and visky trinken. *Two*," holding up two gigantic fingers, apparently only a shade or two smaller than his destined victims, "stay dere. Dose I lift de fence over."

I hastened to inform him that any violence attempted against the parties *while in possession*, although that possession was illegal, would, by a fatuity of the law, land him in the county jail. I said I would not hear of it.

"But suppose dere vos no fiolence? Suppose dose men vos villin', eh? How vos dot for high?"

"I don't understand."

"So! You shall *not* understand! Dot is better. Go away now and dell your men to coom dot house arount at halluff past dree. But *you* coom, mit yourselluff alone, shoost as if you vos *spazieren gehen*, for a valk, by dat fence at dree! Ven you shall dot front door vide open see, go in, and dere you vos! You vill der rest leef to me!"

It was in vain that I begged Rütli to di-

vulge his plan, and pointed out again the danger of his technically breaking the law. But he was firm, assuring me that I myself would be a witness that no assault would be made. I looked into his clear, good-humored eyes, and assented. I had a burning desire to right my wrongs, but I think I also had considerable curiosity.

I passed a miserable quarter of an hour after I had warned my partisans, and then walked alone slowly down the broad leafy street towards the scene of contest. I have a very vivid recollection of my conflicting emotions. I did not believe that I would be killed; I had no distinct intention of killing any of my adversaries; but I had some considerable concern for my loyal friend Rütli, whom I foresaw might be in some peril from the revolver in my unpracticed hand. If I could only avoid shooting *him*, I would be satisfied. I remember that the bells were ringing for church, — a church of which my enemy, the chief squatter, was a deacon in good standing, — and I felt guiltily conscious of my revolver in my hip-pocket, as two or three church-goers passed me with their hymn-books in their hands. I walked leisurely, so as not to attract attention, and

to appear at the exact time, a not very easy task in my youthful excitement. At last I reached the front gate with a beating heart. There was no one on the high veranda, which occupied three sides of the low one-storied house, nor in the garden before it. But the front door was open; I softly passed through the gate, darted up the veranda and into the house. A single glance around the hall and bare, deserted rooms, still smelling of paint, showed me it was empty, and with my pistol in one hand and the other on the lock of the door, I stood inside, ready to bolt it against any one but Rütli. But where was *he?*

The sound of laughter and a noise like skylarking came from the rear of the house and the back yard. Then I suddenly heard Rütli's heavy tread on the veranda, but it was slow, deliberate, and so exaggerated in its weight that the whole house seemed to shake with it. Then from the window I beheld an extraordinary sight! It was Rütli, swaying from side to side, but steadily carrying with outstretched arms two of the squatter party, his hands tightly grasping their collars. Yet I believe his touch was as gentle as with the violets. His face was preternaturally grave; theirs, to my intense

astonishment, while they hung passive from his arms, wore that fatuous, imbecile smile seen on the faces of those who lend themselves to tricks of acrobats and strong men in the arena. He slowly traversed the whole length of one side of the house, walked down the steps to the gate, and then gravely deposited them *outside*. I heard him say, "Dot vins der pet, ain't it?" and immediately after the sharp click of the gate-latch.

Without understanding a thing that had happened, I rightly conceived this was the cue for my appearance with my revolver at the front door. As I opened it I still heard the sound of laughter, which, however, instantly stopped at a sentence from Rütli, which I could not hear. There was an oath, the momentary apparition of two furious and indignant faces over the fence; but these, however, seemed to be instantly extinguished and put down by the enormous palms of Rütli clapped upon their heads. There was a pause, and then Rütli turned around and quietly joined me in the doorway. But the gate was not again opened until the arrival of my partisans, when the house was clearly in my possession.

Safe inside with the door bolted, I turned

eagerly to Rütli for an explanation. It then appeared that during his occasional visits to the garden he had often been an object of amusement and criticism to the men on account of his size, which seemed to them ridiculously inconsistent with his great good humor, gentleness, and delicacy of touch. They had doubted his strength and challenged his powers. He had responded once or twice before, lifting weights or even carrying one of his critics at arm's length for a few steps. But he had reserved his final feat for this day and this purpose. It was for a bet, which they had eagerly accepted, secure in their belief in his simplicity, the sincerity of his motives in coming there, and glad of the opportunity of a little Sunday diversion. In their security they had not locked the door when they came out, and had not noticed that *he* had opened it. This was his simple story. His only comment, "I haf von der pet, but I dinks I shall nod gollect der money." The two men did not return that afternoon, nor did their comrades. Whether they wisely conceived that a man who was so powerful in play might be terrible in earnest; whether they knew that his act, in which they had

been willing performers, had been witnessed by passing citizens, who supposed it was skylarking; or whether their employer got tired of his expensive occupation, I never knew. The public believed the latter; Rütli, myself, and the two men he had evicted alone kept our secret.

From that time Rütli and I became firm friends, and, long after I had no further need of his services in the recaptured house, I often found myself in the little tea-arbor of his prosperous nursery. He was frugal, sober, and industrious; small wonder that in that growing town he waxed rich, and presently opened a restaurant in the main street, connected with his market-garden, which became famous. His relations to me never changed with his changed fortunes; he was always the simple market-gardener and florist who had aided my first housekeeping, and stood by me in an hour of need. Of all things regarding himself he was singularly reticent; I do not think he had any confidants or intimates, even among his own countrymen, whom I believed to be German. But one day he quite accidentally admitted he was a Swiss. As a youthful admirer of the race I was delighted, and

told him so, with the enthusiastic addition that I could now quite understand his independence, with his devoted adherence to another's cause. He smiled sadly, and astonished me by saying that he had not heard from Switzerland since he left six years ago. He did not want to hear anything; he even avoided his countrymen lest he should. I was confounded.

"But," I said, "surely you have a longing to return to your country; all Swiss have! You will go back some day just to breathe the air of your native mountains."

"I shall go back some days," said Rütli, "after I have made mooch, mooch money, but not for dot air."

"What for, then?"

"For revenge — to get efen."

Surprised, and for a moment dismayed as I was, I could not help laughing. "Rütli and revenge!" Impossible! And to make it the more absurd, he was still smoking gently and regarding me with soft, complacent eyes. So unchanged was his face and manner that he might have told me he was going back to be married.

"You do not oonderstand," he said forgivingly. "Some days I shall dell to you

id. Id is a story. You shall make it yourselluff for dose babers dot you write. It is not bretty, berhaps, ain't it, but it is droo. And de endt is not yet."

Only that Rütli never joked, except in a ponderous fashion with many involved sentences, I should have thought he was taking a good-humored rise out of me. But it was not funny. I am afraid I dismissed it from my mind as a revelation of something weak and puerile, quite inconsistent with his practical common sense and strong simplicity, and wished he had not alluded to it. I never asked him to tell me the story. It was a year later, and only when he had invited me to come to the opening of a new hotel, erected by him at a mountain spa of great resort, that he himself alluded to it.

The hotel was a wonderful affair, even for those days, and Rütli's outlay of capital convinced me that by this time he must have made the "mooch money" he coveted. Something of this was in my mind when we sat by the window of his handsomely furnished private office, overlooking the pines of a Californian cañon. I asked him if the scenery was like Switzerland.

"Ach! no!" he replied; "but I vill puild a hotel shoost like dis dare."

"Is that a part of your revenge?" I asked, with a laugh.

"Ah! so! a bart."

I felt relieved; a revenge so practical did not seem very malicious or idiotic. After a pause he puffed contemplatively at his pipe, and then said, "I dell you somedings of dot story now."

He began. I should like to tell it in his own particular English, mixed with American slang, but it would not convey the simplicity of the narrator. He was the son of a large family who had lived for centuries in one of the highest villages in the Bernese Oberland. He attained his size and strength early, but with a singular distaste to use them in the rough regular work on the farm, although he was a great climber and mountaineer, and, what was at first overlooked as mere boyish fancy, had an insatiable love and curious knowledge of plants and flowers. He knew the haunts of Edelweiss, Alpine rose, and blue gentian, and had brought home rare and unknown blossoms from under the icy lips of glaciers. But as he did this when his time was supposed to be occupied in looking after the cows in the higher pastures and making cheeses, there was trou-

ble in that hard-working, practical family. A giant with the tastes and disposition of a schoolgirl was an anomaly in a Swiss village. Unfortunately again, he was not studious; his record in the village school had been on a par with his manual work, and the family had not even the consolation of believing that they were fostering a genius. In a community where practical industry was the highest virtue, it was not strange, perhaps, that he was called "lazy" and "shiftless;" no one knew the long climbs and tireless vigils he had undergone in remote solitudes in quest of his favorites, or, knowing, forgave him for it. Abstemious, frugal, and patient as he was, even the crusts of his father's table were given him grudgingly. He often went hungry rather than ask the bread he had failed to earn. How his great frame was nurtured in those days he never knew; perhaps the giant mountains recognized some kin in him and fed and strengthened him after their own fashion. Even his gentleness was confounded with cowardice. "Dot vos de hardtest," he said simply; "it is not goot to be opligit to half crush your brudder, ven he would make a laugh of you to your sweet-

heart." The end came sooner than he expected, and, oddly enough, through this sweetheart. "Gottlieb," she said to him one day, "the English *Fremde* who stayed here last night met me when I was carrying some of those beautiful flowers you gave me. He asked me where they were to be found, and I told him only *you* knew. He wants to see you; go to him. It may be luck to you." Rütli went. The stranger, an English Alpine climber of scientific tastes, talked with him for an hour. At the end of that time, to everybody's astonishment, he engaged this hopeless idler as his personal guide for three months, at the sum of five francs a day! It was inconceivable, it was unheard of! The Englander was as mad as Gottlieb, whose intellect had always been under suspicion! The schoolmaster pursed up his lips, the pastor shook his head; no good could come of it; the family looked upon it as another freak of Gottlieb's, but there was one big mouth less to feed and more room in the kitchen, and they let him go. They parted from him as ungraciously as they had endured his presence.

Then followed two months of sunshine in Rütli's life — association with his beloved

plants, and the intelligent sympathy and direction of a cultivated man. Even in altitudes so dangerous that they had to take other and more experienced guides, Rütli was always at his master's side. That savant's collection of Alpine flora excelled all previous ones; he talked freely with Rütli of further work in the future, and relaxed his English reserve so far as to confide to him that the outcome of their collection and observation might be a book. He gave a flower a Latin name, in which even the ignorant and delighted Rütli could distinguish some likeness to his own. But the book was never compiled. In one of their later and more difficult ascents they and their two additional guides were overtaken by a sudden storm. Swept from their feet down an ice-bound slope, Rütli alone of the roped-together party kept a foothold on the treacherous incline. Here this young Titan, with bleeding fingers clenched in a rock cleft, sustained the struggles and held up the lives of his companions by that precious thread for more than an hour. Perhaps he might have saved them, but in their desperate efforts to regain their footing the rope slipped upon a jagged edge of outcrop and parted as

if cut by a knife. The two guides passed without an outcry into obscurity and death; Rütli, with a last despairing exertion, dragged to his own level his unconscious master, crippled by a broken leg.

Your true hero is apt to tell his tale simply. Rütli did not dwell upon these details, nor need I. Left alone upon a treacherous ice slope in benumbing cold, with a helpless man, eight hours afterwards he staggered, half blind, incoherent, and inarticulate, into a "shelter" hut, with the dead body of his master in his stiffened arms. The shelter-keepers turned their attention to Rütli, who needed it most. Blind and delirious, with scarce a chance for life, he was sent the next day to a hospital, where he lay for three months, helpless, imbecile, and unknown. The dead body of the Englishman was identified, and sent home; the bodies of the guides were recovered by their friends; but no one knew aught of Rütli, even his name. While the event was still fresh in the minds of those who saw him enter the hut with the body of his master, a paragraph appeared in a Berne journal recording the heroism of this nameless man. But it could not be corroborated nor explained by the demented

hero, and was presently forgotten. Six months from the day he had left his home he was discharged cured. He had not a kreutzer in his pocket; he had never drawn his wages from his employer; he had preferred to have it in a lump sum that he might astonish his family on his return. His eyes were still weak, his memory feeble; only his great physical strength remained through his long illness. A few sympathizing travelers furnished him the means to reach his native village, many miles away. He found his family had heard of the loss of the Englishman and the guides, and had believed he was one of them. Already he was forgotten.

"Ven you vos once peliefed to be det," said Rütli, after a philosophic pause and puff, "it vos not goot to ondeceif beoples. You oopset somedings, soomdimes always. Der hole dot you hef made in der grount, among your frients and your family, vos covered up alretty. You are loocky if you vill not fint some vellars shtanding upon id! My frent, ven you vos *dink* det, *shtay* det, *be* det, and you vill lif happy!"

"But your sweetheart?" I said eagerly.

A slight gleam of satire stole into Rütli's

light eyes. "My sweetheart, ven I vos dinks det, is der miller engaged do bromply! It is mooch better dan to a man dot vos boor and plint and grazy! So! Vell, der next day I pids dem goot-py, und from der door I say, 'I am det now; but ven I next comes pack alife, I shall dis village py! der lants, der houses all togedders. And den for yourselluffs look oudt!'"

"Then that 's your revenge? That is what you really intend to do?" I said, half laughing, yet with an uneasy recollection of his illness and enfeebled mind.

"Yes. Look here! I show you somedings." He opened a drawer of his desk and took out what appeared to be some diagrams, plans, and a small water-colored map, like a surveyor's tracing. "Look," he said, laying his finger on the latter, "dat is a map from my fillage. I hef myselluff made it out from my memory. Dot," pointing to a blank space, "is der mountain side high up, so far. It is no goot until I vill a tunnel make or der grade lefel. Dere vas mine fader's house, dere vos der church, der schoolhouse, dot vos de burgomaster's house," he went on, pointing to the respective plots in this old curving parallelogram

of the mountain shelf. "So was the fillage when I leave him on the 5th of March, eighteen hundred and feefty. Now you shall see him shoost as I vill make him ven I go back." He took up another plan, beautifully drawn and colored, and evidently done by a professional hand. It was a practical, yet almost fairylike transformation of the same spot! The narrow mountain shelf was widened by excavation, and a boulevard stretched on either side. A great hotel, not unlike the one in which we sat, stood in an open terrace, with gardens and fountains — the site of his father's house. Blocks of pretty dwellings, shops, and cafés filled the intermediate space. I laid down the paper.

"How long have you had this idea?"

"Efer since I left dere, fifteen years ago."

"But your father and mother may be dead by this time?"

"So, but dere vill be odders. Und der blace — it vill remain."

"But all this will cost a fortune, and you are not sure" —

"I know shoost vot id vill gost, to a cend."

"And you think you can ever afford to carry out your idea?"

"I *vill* affort id. Ven you shall make yet some moneys and go to Europe, you shall see. I *vill* infite you dere first. Now coom and look der house around."

. . . . . .

I did *not* make "some moneys," but I *did* go to Europe. Three years after this last interview with Rütli I was coming from Interlaken to Berne by rail. I had not heard from him, and I had forgotten the name of his village, but as I looked up from the paper I was reading, I suddenly recognized him in the further end of the same compartment I occupied. His recognition of me was evidently as sudden and unexpected. After our first hand-grasp and greeting, I said: —

"And how about our new village?"

"Dere is no fillage."

"What! You have given up the idea?"

"Yes. There is no fillage, olt or new."

"I don't understand."

He looked at me a moment. "You have not heard?"

"No."

He gently picked up a little local guide-book that lay in my lap, and turning its leaves, pointed to a page, and read as follows: —

"5 M. beyond, the train passes a curve R., where a fine view of the lake may be seen. A little to the R. rises the steep slopes of the ——, the scene of a terrible disaster. At three o'clock on March 5, 1850, the little village of ——, lying midway of the slope, with its population of 950 souls, was completely destroyed by a landslip from the top of the mountain. So sudden was the catastrophe that not a single escape is recorded. A large portion of the mountain crest, as will be observed when it is seen in profile, descended to the valley, burying the unfortunate village to a depth variously estimated at from 1000 ft. to 1800 ft. The geological causes which produced this extraordinary displacement have been fully discussed, but the greater evidence points to the theory of subterranean glaciers. 5 M. beyond —— the train crosses the R. bridge."

I laid down the guide-book in breathless astonishment.

"And you never heard of this in all these years?"

"Nefer! I asked no questions, I read no pooks. I have no ledders from home."

"And yet you"— I stopped, I could not

call him a fool; neither could I, in the face of his perfect composure and undisturbed eyes, exhibit a concern greater than his own. An uneasy recollection of what he confessed had been his mental condition immediately after his accident came over me. Had he been the victim of a strange hallucination regarding his house and family all these years? Were these dreams of revenge, this fancy of creating a new village, only an outcome of some shock arising out of the disaster itself, which he had long since forgotten?

He was looking from the window. "Coom," he said, "ve are near der blace. I vill show id to you." He rose and passed out to the rear platform. We were in the rear car, and a new panorama of the lake and mountains flashed upon us at every curve of the line. I followed him. Presently he pointed to what appeared to be a sheer wall of rock and stunted vegetation towering two or three thousand feet above us, which started out of a gorge we were passing. "Dere it vos!" he said. I saw the vast stretch of rock face rising upward and onward, but nothing else. No débris, no ruins, nor even a swelling or rounding of

the mountain flank over that awful tomb. Yet, stay! as we dashed across the gorge, and the face of the mountain shifted, high up, the sky-line was slightly broken as if a few inches, a mere handful, of the crest was crumbled away. And then — both gorge and mountain vanished.

I was still embarrassed and uneasy, and knew not what to say to this man at my side, whose hopes and ambition had been as quickly overthrown and buried, and whose life-dream had as quickly vanished. But he himself, taking his pipe from his lips, broke the silence.

"It vos a narrow esgabe!"

"What was?"

"Vy, dis dings. If I had stayed in my fader's house, I vould haf been det for goot, and perried too! Somedimes dose dings cooms oudt apout right, don't id?"

Unvanquished philosopher! As we stood there looking at the flying landscape and sinking lesser hills, one by one the great snow peaks slowly arose behind them, lifting themselves, as if to take a last wondering look at the man they had triumphed over, but had not subdued.

THE PASSING OF ENRIQUEZ

When Enriquez Saltillo ran away with Miss Mannersley, as already recorded in these chronicles,[1] her relatives and friends found it much easier to forgive that ill-assorted union than to understand it. For, after all, Enriquez was the scion of an old Spanish-Californian family, and in due time would have his share of his father's three square leagues, whatever incongruity there was between his lively Latin extravagance and Miss Mannersley's Puritan precision and intellectual superiority. They had gone to Mexico; Mrs. Saltillo, as was known, having an interest in Aztec antiquities, and he being utterly submissive to her wishes. For myself from my knowledge of Enriquez's nature, I had grave doubts of his entire subjugation, although I knew the prevailing opinion was that Mrs. Saltillo's superiority would speedily tame him. Since

[1] See "The Devotion of Enriquez," in *Barker's Luck, and Other Stories.*

his brief and characteristic note apprising me of his marriage, I had not heard from him. It was, therefore, with some surprise, a good deal of reminiscent affection, and a slight twinge of reproach that, two years after, I looked up from some proofs, in the sanctum of the "Daily Excelsior," to recognize his handwriting on a note that was handed to me by a yellow Mexican boy.

A single glance at its contents showed me that Mrs. Saltillo's correct Bostonian speech had not yet subdued Enriquez's peculiar Spanish-American slang: —

"Here we are again, — right side up with care, — at 1110 Dupont Street, Telegraph Hill. Second floor from top. 'Ring and push.' 'No book agents need apply.' How 's your royal nibs? I kiss your hand! Come at six, — the band shall play at seven, — and regard your friend 'Mees Boston,' who will tell you about the little old nigger boys, and your old Uncle 'Ennery."

Two things struck me: Enriquez had not changed; Mrs. Saltillo had certainly yielded up some of her peculiar prejudices. For the address given, far from being a fashionable district, was known as the "Spanish quarter," which, while it still held some old

Spanish families, was chiefly given over to half-castes and obscurer foreigners. Even poverty could not have driven Mrs. Saltillo to such a refuge against her will; nevertheless, a good deal of concern for Enriquez's fortune mingled with my curiosity, as I impatiently waited for six o'clock to satisfy it.

It was a breezy climb to 1110 Dupont Street; and although the street had been graded, the houses retained their airy elevation, and were accessible only by successive flights of wooden steps to the front door, which still gave perilously upon the street, sixty feet below. I now painfully appreciated Enriquez's adaptation of the time-honored joke about the second floor. An invincible smell of garlic almost took my remaining breath away as the door was opened to me by a swarthy Mexican woman, whose loose *camisa* seemed to be slipping from her unstable bust, and was held on only by the mantua-like shawl which supplemented it, gripped by one brown hand. Dizzy from my ascent to that narrow perch, which looked upon nothing but the distant bay and shores of Contra Costa, I felt as apologetic as if I had landed from a balloon; but the woman greeted me with a languid

Spanish smile and a lazy display of white teeth, as if my arrival was quite natural. Don Enriquez, "of a fact," was not himself in the *casa*, but was expected "on the instant." "Donna Urania" was at home.

"Donna Urania"? For an instant I had forgotten that Mrs. Saltillo's first name was Urania, so pleasantly and spontaneously did it fall from the Spanish lips. Nor was I displeased at this chance of learning something of Don Enriquez's fortunes and the Saltillo ménage before confronting my old friend. The servant preceded me to the next floor, and, opening a door, ushered me into the lady's presence.

I had carried with me, on that upward climb, a lively recollection of Miss Mannersley as I had known her two years before. I remembered her upright, almost stiff, slight figure, the graceful precision of her poses, the faultless symmetry and taste of her dress, and the atmosphere of a fastidious and wholesome cleanliness which exhaled from her. In the lady I saw before me, half reclining in a rocking-chair, there was none of the stiffness and nicety. Habited in a loose gown of some easy, flexible, but rich material, worn with that peculiarly in-

dolent slouch of the Mexican woman, Mrs. Saltillo had parted with half her individuality. Even her arched feet and thin ankles, the close-fitting boots or small slippers of which were wont to accent their delicacy, were now lost in a short, low-quartered kid shoe of the Spanish type, in which they moved loosely. Her hair, which she had always worn with a certain Greek simplicity, was parted at one side. Yet her face, with its regularity of feature, and small, thin, red-lipped mouth, was quite unchanged; and her velvety brown eyes were as beautiful and inscrutable as ever.

With the same glance I had taken in her surroundings, quite as incongruous to her former habits. The furniture, though of old and heavy mahogany, had suffered from careless alien hands, and was interspersed with modern and unmatchable makeshifts, yet preserving the distinctly scant and formal attitude of furnished lodgings. It was certainly unlike the artistic trifles and delicate refinements of her uncle's drawing-room, which we all knew her taste had dictated and ruled. The black and white engravings, the outlined heads of Minerva and Diana, were excluded from the walls for

two cheap colored Catholic prints, — a soulless Virgin, and the mystery of the Bleeding Heart. Against the wall, in one corner, hung the only object which seemed a memento of their travels, — a singular-looking upright Indian "papoose-case" or cradle, glaringly decorated with beads and paint, probably an Aztec relic. On a round table, the velvet cover of which showed marks of usage and abusage, there were scattered books and writing materials; and my editorial instinct suddenly recognized, with a thrill of apprehension, the loose leaves of an undoubted manuscript. This circumstance, taken with the fact of Donna Urania's hair being parted on one side, and the general negligée of her appearance, was a disturbing revelation.

My wandering eye apparently struck her, for after the first greeting she pointed to the manuscript with a smile.

"Yes; that is *the* manuscript. I suppose Enriquez told you all about it? He said he had written."

I was dumfounded. I certainly had not understood *all* of Enriquez's slang; it was always so decidedly his own, and peculiar. Yet I could not recall any allusion to this.

"He told me something of it, but very vaguely," I ventured to say deprecatingly; "but I am afraid that I thought more of seeing my old friend again than of anything else."

"During our stay in Mexico," continued Mrs. Saltillo, with something of her old precision, "I made some researches into Aztec history, a subject always deeply interesting to me, and I thought I would utilize the result by throwing it on paper. Of course it is better fitted for a volume of reference than for a newspaper, but Enriquez thought you might want to use it for your journal."

I knew that Enriquez had no taste for literature, and had even rather depreciated it in the old days, with his usual extravagance; but I managed to say very pleasantly that I was delighted with his suggestion and should be glad to read the manuscript. After all, it was not improbable that Mrs. Saltillo, who was educated and intelligent, should write well, if not popularly. "Then Enriquez does not begrudge you the time that your work takes from him," I added laughingly. "You seem to have occupied your honeymoon practically."

"We quite comprehend our respective duties," said Mrs. Saltillo dryly; "and have from the first. We have our own lives to live, independent of my uncle and Enriquez's father. We have not only accepted the responsibility of our own actions, but we both feel the higher privilege of creating our own conditions without extraneous aid from our relatives."

It struck me that this somewhat exalted statement was decidedly a pose, or a return of Urania Mannersley's old ironical style. I looked quietly into her brown, near-sighted eyes; but, as once before, my glance seemed to slip from their moist surface without penetrating the inner thought beneath. "And what does Enriquez do for *his* part?" I asked smilingly.

I fully expected to hear that the energetic Enriquez was utilizing his peculiar tastes and experiences by horse-breaking, stock-raising, professional bull-fighting, or even horse-racing, but was quite astonished when she answered quietly: —

"Enriquez is giving himself up to geology and practical metallurgy, with a view to scientific, purely scientific, mining."

Enriquez and geology! In that instant

all I could remember of it were his gibes at the "geologian," as he was wont to term Professor Dobbs, a former admirer of Miss Mannersley's. To add to my confusion Mrs. Saltillo at the same moment absolutely voiced my thought.

"You may remember Professor Dobbs," she went on calmly, "one of the most eminent scientists over here, and a very old Boston friend. He has taken Enriquez in hand. His progress is most satisfactory; we have the greatest hopes of him."

"And how soon do you both hope to have some practical results of his study?" I could not help asking a little mischievously; for I somehow resented the plural pronoun in her last sentence.

"Very soon," said Mrs. Saltillo, ignoring everything but the question. "You know Enriquez's sanguine temperament. Perhaps he is already given to evolving theories without a sufficient basis of fact. Still, he has the daring of a discoverer. His ideas of the oölitic formation are not without originality, and Professor Dobbs says that in his conception of the Silurian beach there are gleams that are distinctly precious."

I looked at Mrs. Saltillo, who had rein-

forced her eyes with her old piquant *pince-nez*, but could detect no irony in them. She was prettily imperturbable, that was all. There was an awkward silence. Then it was broken by a bounding step on the stairs, a wide-open fling of the door, and Enriquez pirouetted into the room: Enriquez, as of old, unchanged from the crown of his smooth, coal-black hair to the tips of his small, narrow Arabian feet; Enriquez, with his thin, curling mustache, his dancing eyes set in his immovable face, just as I had always known him!

He affected to lapse against the door for a minute, as if staggered by a resplendent vision. Then he said: —

"What do I regard? Is it a dream, or have I again got them — thees jimjams? My best friend and my best — I mean my *only* — wife! Embrace me!"

He gave me an enthusiastic embrace and a wink like sheet-lightning, passed quickly to his wife, before whom he dropped on one knee, raised the toe of her slipper to his lips, and then sank on the sofa in simulated collapse, murmuring, "Thees is too mooch of white stone for one day!"

Through all this I saw his wife regarding

him with exactly the same critically amused expression with which she had looked upon him in the days of their strange courtship. She evidently had not tired of his extravagance, and yet I feel as puzzled by her manner as then. She rose and said: "I suppose you have a good deal to say to each other, and I will leave you by yourselves." Turning to her husband, she added, "I have already spoken about the Aztec manuscript."

The word brought Enriquez to his feet again. "Ah! The little old nigger — you have read?" I began to understand. "My wife, my best friend, and the little old nigger, all in one day. Eet is perfect!" Nevertheless, in spite of this ecstatic and overpowering combination, he hurried to take his wife's hand; kissing it, he led her to a door opening into another room, made her a low bow to the ground as she passed out, and then rejoined me.

"So these are the little old niggers you spoke of in your note," I said, pointing to the manuscript. "Deuce take me if I understood you!"

"Ah, my leetle brother, it is *you* who have changed!" said Enriquez dolorously. "Is it that you no more understand Ameri-

can, or have the 'big head' of the editor? Regard me! Of these Aztecs my wife have made study. She have pursued the little nigger to his cave, his grotto, where he is dead a thousand year. I have myself assist, though I like it not, because thees mummy, look you, Pancho, is not lively. And the mummy who is not dead, believe me! even the young lady mummy, you shall not take to your heart. But my wife" — he stopped, and kissed his hand toward the door whence she had flitted — "ah, *she* is wonderful! She has made the story of them, the peecture of them, from the life and on the instant! You shall take them, my leetle brother, for your journal; you shall announce in the big letter: 'Mooch Importance. The Aztec, He is Found.' 'How He Look and Lif.' 'The Everlasting Nigger.' You shall sell many paper, and Urania shall have scoop in much spondulics and rocks. Hoop-la! For — you comprehend? — my wife and I have settled that she shall forgif her oncle; I shall forgif my father; but from them we take no cent, not a red, not a scad! We are independent! Of ourselves we make a Fourth of July. United we stand; divided we shall fall over! There you are! *Bueno!*"

It was impossible to resist his wild, yet perfectly sincere, extravagance, his dancing black eyes and occasional flash of white teeth in his otherwise immovable and serious countenance. Nevertheless, I managed to say: —

"But how about yourself, Enriquez, and this geology, you know?"

His eyes twinkled. "Ah, you shall hear. But first you shall take a drink. I have the very old Bourbon. He is not so old as the Aztec, but, believe me, he is very much liflier. Attend! Hol' on!" He was already rummaging on a shelf, but apparently without success; then he explored a buffet, with no better results, and finally attacked a large drawer, throwing out on the floor, with his old impetuosity, a number of geological specimens, carefully labeled. I picked up one that had rolled near me. It was labeled "Conglomerate sandstone." I picked up another: it had the same label.

"Then you are really collecting?" I said, with astonishment.

"*Ciertamente*," responded Enriquez, — "what other fool shall I look? I shall relate of this geology when I shall have found this beast of a bottle. Ah, here he have

hide!" He extracted from a drawer a bottle nearly full of spirits, — tippling was not one of Enriquez's vices. "You shall say 'when.' 'Ere 's to our noble selfs!"

When he had drunk, I picked up another fragment of his collection. It had the same label. "You are very rich in 'conglomerate sandstone,'" I said. "Where do you find it?"

"In the street," said Enriquez, with great calmness.

"In the street?" I echoed.

"Yes, my friend! He ees call the 'cobblestone,' also the 'pouding-stone,' when he ees at his home in the country. He ees also a small 'boulder.' I pick him up; I crack him; he made three separate piece of conglomerate sandstone. I bring him home to my wife in my pocket. She rejoice; we are happy. When comes the efening, I sit down and make him a label; while my wife, she sit down and write of the Aztec. Ah, my friend, you shall say of the geology it ees a fine, a *beautiful* study; but the study of the wife, and what shall please her, believe me, ees much finer! Believe your old Uncle 'Ennery every time! On thees question he gets there; he gets left, nevarre!"

"But Professor Dobbs, your geologian, what does *he* say to this frequent recurrence of the conglomerate sandstone period in your study?" I asked quickly.

"He say nothing. You comprehend? He ees a profound geologian, but he also has the admiration excessif for my wife Urania." He stopped to kiss his hand again toward the door, and lighted a cigarette. "The geologian would not that he should break up the happy efening of his friends by thees small detail. He put aside his head — so; he say, 'A leetle freestone, a leetle granite, now and then, for variety; they are building in Montgomery Street.' I take the hint, like a wink to the horse that has gone blind. I attach to myself part of the edifice that is erecting himself in Montgomery Street. I craek him; I bring him home. I sit again at the feet of my beautiful Urania, and I label him 'Freestone,' 'Granite;' but I do not say 'from Parrott's Bank' — eet is not necessary for our happiness."

"And you do this sort of thing only because you think it pleases your wife?" I asked bluntly.

"My friend," rejoined Enriquez, perching

himself on the back of the sofa, and caressing his knees as he puffed his cigarette meditatively, "you have ask a conundrum. Gif to me an easier one! It is of truth that I make much of these thing to please Urania. But I shall confess all. Behold, I appear to you, my leetle brother, in my *camisa* — my shirt! I blow on myself; I gif myself away."

He rose gravely from the sofa, and drew a small box from one of the drawers of the wardrobe. Opening it, he discovered several specimens of gold-bearing quartz, and one or two scales of gold. "Thees," he said, "friend Pancho, is my own geology; for thees I am what you see. But I say nothing to Urania; for she have much disgust of mere gold, — of what she calls 'vulgar mining,' — and believe me, a fear of the effect of 'speculation' upon my *temperamento* — you comprehend my complexion, my brother? Reflect upon it, Pancho! *I*, who am the *filosofo*, if that I am anything!" He looked at me with great levity of eye and supernatural gravity of demeanor. "But eet ees the jealous affection of the wife, my friend, for which I make play to her with the humble leetle pouding-stone rather than the gold quartz that affrights."

"But what do you want with them, if you have no shares in anything and do not speculate?" I asked.

"Pardon! That ees where you slip up, my leetle friend." He took from the same drawer a clasped portfolio, and unlocked it, producing half a dozen prospectuses and certificates of mining shares. I stood aghast as I recognized the names of one or two extravagant failures of the last ten years, — "played-out" mines that had been galvanized into deceptive life in London, Paris, and New York, to the grief of shareholders abroad and the laughter of the initiated at home. I could scarcely keep my equanimity. "You do not mean to say that you have any belief or interest in this rubbish?" I said quickly.

"What you call 'rubbish,' my good Pancho, ees the rubbish that the American speculator have dump himself upon them in the shaft, the rubbish of the advertisement, of the extravagant expense, of the salary, of the assessment, of the 'freeze-out.' For thees, look you, is the old Mexican mine. My grandfather and hees father have both seen them work before you were born, and the American knew not there was gold in California."

I knew he spoke truly. One or two were original silver mines in the south, worked by peons and Indian slaves, a rope windlass, and a venerable donkey.

"But those were silver mines," I said suspiciously, "and these are gold specimens."

"They are from the same mother," said the imperturbable Enriquez, — "the same mine. The old peons worked him for *silver*, the precious dollar that buy everything, that he send in the galleon to the Philippines for the silk and spice! *That* is good enough for *him!* For the gold he made nothing, even as my leetle wife Urania. And regard me here! There ees a proverb of my father's which say that 'it shall take a gold mine to work a silver mine,' so mooch more he cost. You work him, you are lost! *Naturalmente*, if you turn him round, if it take you only a silver mine to work a gold mine, you are gain. Thees ees logic!"

The intense gravity of his face at this extraordinary deduction upset my own. But as I was never certain that Enriquez was not purposely mystifying me, with some ulterior object, I could not help saying a little wickedly: —

"Yes, I understand all that; but how

about this geologian? Will he not tell your wife? You know he was a great admirer of hers."

"That shall show the great intelligence of him, my Pancho. He will have the four 'S's,' especially the *secreto!*"

There could be no serious discussion in his present mood. I gathered up the pages of his wife's manuscript, said lightly that, as she had the first claim upon my time, I should examine the Aztec material and report in a day or two. As I knew I had little chance in the hands of these two incomprehensibles together, I begged him not to call his wife, but to convey my adieus to her, and, in spite of his embraces and protestations, I managed to get out of the room. But I had scarcely reached the front door when I heard Enriquez's voice and his bounding step on the stairs. In another moment his arm was round my neck.

"You must return on the instant! Mother of God! I haf forget, *she* haf forget, *we* all haf forget! But you have not seen him!"

"Seen whom?"

"*El niño*, the baby! You comprehend, pig! The *criaturica*, the leetle child of ourselfs!"

"The baby?" I said confusedly. "*Is* there — is there a *baby?*"

"You hear him?" said Enriquez, sending an appealing voice upward. "You hear him, Urania? You comprehend. This beast of a leetle brother demands if there ees one!"

"I beg your pardon," I said, hurriedly reascending the stairs. On the landing I met Mrs. Saltillo, but as calm, composed, and precise as her husband was extravagant and vehement. "It was an oversight of Enriquez's," she said quietly, reëntering the room with us; "and was all the more strange, as the child was in the room with you all the time."

She pointed to the corner of the wall, where hung what I had believed to be an old Indian relic. To my consternation, it *was* a bark "papoose-case," occupied by a *living* child, swathed and bandaged after the approved Indian fashion. It was asleep, I believe, but it opened a pair of bright huckleberry eyes, set in the smallest of features, that were like those of a carved ivory idol, and uttered a "coo" at the sound of its mother's voice. She stood on one side with unruffled composure, while Enriquez threw himself into an attitude before it, with

clasped hands, as if it had been an image of the Holy Child. For myself, I was too astounded to speak; luckily, my confusion was attributed to the inexperience of a bachelor.

"I have adopted," said Mrs. Saltillo, with the faintest touch of maternal pride in her manner, "what I am convinced is the only natural and hygienic mode of treating the human child. It may be said to be a reversion to the aborigine, but I have yet to learn that it is not superior to our civilized custom. By these bandages the limbs of the infant are kept in proper position until they are strong enough to support the body, and such a thing as malformation is unknown. It is protected by its cradle, which takes the place of its incubating-shell, from external injury, the injudicious coddling of nurses, the so-called 'dancings' and pernicious rockings. The supine position, as in the adult, is imposed only at night. By the aid of this strap it may be carried on long journeys, either by myself or by Enriquez, who thus shares with me, as he fully recognizes, its equal responsibility and burden."

"It — certainly does not — cry," I stammered.

"Crying," said Mrs. Saltillo, with a curve of her pretty red lip, "is the protest of the child against insanitary and artificial treatment. In its upright, unostentatious cradle it is protected against that injudicious fondling and dangerous promiscuous osculation to which, as an infant in human arms, it is so often subjected. Above all, it is kept from that shameless and mortifying publicity so unjust to the weak and unformed animal. The child repays this consideration by a gratifying silence. It cannot be expected to understand our thoughts, speech, or actions; it cannot participate in our pleasures. Why should it be forced into premature contact with them, merely to feed our vanity or selfishness? Why should we assume our particular parental accident as superior to the common lot? If we do not give our offspring that prominence before our visitors so common to the young wife and husband, it is for that reason solely; and this may account for what seemed the forgetfulness of Enriquez in speaking of it or pointing it out to you. And I think his action in calling you back to see it was somewhat precipitate. As one does not usually introduce an unknown and inferior

stranger without some previous introduction, he might have asked you if you wished to see the baby before he recalled you."

I looked from Urania's unfathomable eyes to Enriquez's impenetrable countenance. I might have been equal to either of them alone, but together they were invincible. I looked hopelessly at the baby. With its sharp little eyes and composed face, it certainly was a marvelous miniature of Enriquez. I said so.

"It would be singular if it was not," said Mrs. Saltillo dryly; "and as I believe it is by no means an uncommon fact in human nature, it seems to me strange that people should insist upon it as a discovery. It is an inheritance, however, that in due time progress and science will no doubt interrupt, to the advancement of the human race. I need not say that both Enriquez and myself look forward to it with confident tranquillity."

There was clearly nothing for me to do now but to shake hands again and take my leave. Yet I was so much impressed with the unreality of the whole scene that when I reached the front door I had a strong impulse to return suddenly and fall in upon

them in their relaxed and natural attitudes. They could not keep up this pose between themselves; and I half expected to see their laughing faces at the window, as I glanced up before wending my perilous way to the street.

I found Mrs. Saltillo's manuscript well written and, in the narrative parts, even graphic and sparkling. I suppressed some general remarks on the universe, and some correlative theories of existence, as not appertaining particularly to the Aztecs, and as not meeting any unquenchable thirst for information on the part of the readers of the "Daily Excelsior." I even promoted my fair contributor to the position of having been commissioned, at great expense, to make the Mexican journey especially for the "Excelsior." This, with Mrs. Saltillo's somewhat precise preraphaelite drawings and water-colors, vilely reproduced by woodcuts, gave quite a sensational air to her production, which, divided into parts, for two or three days filled a whole page of the paper. I am not aware of any particular service that it did to ethnology; but, as I pointed out in the editorial column, it showed that the people of California were not given over by

material greed to the exclusion of intellectual research; and as it was attacked instantly in long communications from one or two scientific men, it thus produced more copy.

Briefly, it was a boom for the author and the "Daily Excelsior." I should add, however, that a rival newspaper intimated that it was also a boom for Mrs. Saltillo's *husband*, and called attention to the fact that a deserted Mexican mine, known as "El Bolero," was described graphically in the Aztec article among the news, and again appeared in the advertising columns of the same paper. I turned somewhat indignantly to the file of the "Excelsior," and, singularly enough, found in the elaborate prospectus of a new gold-mining company the description of the El Bolero mine as a *quotation* from the Aztec article, with extraordinary inducements for the investment of capital in the projected working of an old mine. If I had had any difficulty in recognizing in the extravagant style the flamboyant hand of Enriquez in English writing, I might have read his name plainly enough displayed as president of the company. It was evidently the prospectus of one of the ventures he had shown me. I

was more amused than indignant at the little trick he had played upon my editorial astuteness. After all, if I had thus benefited the young couple I was satisfied. I had not seen them since my first visit, as I was very busy, — my communications with Mrs. Saltillo had been carried on by letters and proofs, — and when I did finally call at their house, it was only to find that they were visiting at San José. I wondered whether the baby was still hanging on the wall, or, if he was taken with them, who carried him.

A week later the stock of El Bolero was quoted at par. More than that, an incomprehensible activity had been given to all the deserted Mexican mines, and people began to look up scrip hitherto thrown aside as worthless. Whether it was one of those extraordinary fevers which attacked Californian speculation in the early days, or whether Enriquez Saltillo had infected the stock-market with his own extravagance, I never knew; but plans as wild, inventions as fantastic, and arguments as illogical as ever emanated from his own brain, were set forth "on 'Change" with a gravity equal to his own. The most reasonable hypothesis was

that it was the effect of the well-known fact that the Spanish Californian hitherto had not been a mining speculator, nor connected in any way with the gold production on his native soil, deeming it inconsistent with his patriarchal life and landed dignity, and that when a "son of one of the oldest Spanish families, identified with the land and its peculiar character for centuries, lent himself to its mineral exploitations," — I beg to say that I am quoting from the advertisement in the "Excelsior," — "it was a guerdon of success." This was so far true that in a week Enriquez Saltillo was rich, and in a fair way to become a millionaire.

It was a hot afternoon when I alighted from the stifling Wingdam coach, and stood upon the cool, deep veranda of the Carquinez Springs Hotel. After I had shaken off the dust which had lazily followed us, in our descent of the mountain road, like a red smoke, occasionally overflowing the coach windows, I went up to the room I had engaged for my brief holiday. I knew the place well, although I could see that the hotel itself had lately been redecorated and enlarged to meet the increasing requirements

of fashion. I knew the forest of enormous redwoods where one might lose one's self in a five minutes' walk from the veranda. I knew the rocky trail that climbed the mountain to the springs, twisting between giant boulders. I knew the arid garden, deep in the wayside dust, with its hurriedly planted tropical plants, already withering in the dry autumn sunshine, and washed into fictitious freshness, night and morning by the hydraulic irrigating-hose. I knew, too, the cool, reposeful night winds that swept down from invisible snow-crests beyond, with the hanging out of monstrous stars, that too often failed to bring repose to the feverish guests. For the overstrained neurotic workers who fled hither from the baking plains of Sacramento, or from the chill sea-fogs of San Francisco, never lost the fierce unrest that had driven them here. Unaccustomed to leisure, their enforced idleness impelled them to seek excitement in the wildest gayeties; the bracing mountain air only reinvigorated them to pursue pleasure as they had pursued the occupations they had left behind. Their sole recreations were furious drives over break-neck roads; mad, scampering cavalcades through the sedate woods;

gambling parties in private rooms, where large sums were lost by capitalists on leave; champagne suppers; and impromptu balls that lasted through the calm, reposeful night to the first rays of light on the distant snow-line. Unimaginative men, in their temporary sojourn they more often outraged or dispossessed nature in her own fastnesses than courted her for sympathy or solitude. There were playing-cards left lying behind boulders, and empty champagne bottles forgotten in forest depths.

I remembered all this when, refreshed by a bath, I leaned from the balcony of my room and watched the pulling up of a brake, drawn by six dusty, foam-bespattered horses, driven by a noted capitalist. As its hot, perspiring, closely veiled yet burning-faced fair occupants descended, in all the dazzling glory of summer toilets, and I saw the gentlemen consult their watches with satisfaction, and congratulate their triumphant driver, I knew the characteristic excitement they had enjoyed from a "record run," probably for a bet, over a mountain road in a burning sun.

"Not bad, eh? Forty-four minutes from the summit!"

The voice seemed at my elbow. I turned quickly, to recognize an acquaintance, a young San Francisco broker, leaning from the next balcony to mine. But my attention was just then preoccupied by the face and figure, which seemed familiar to me, of a woman who was alighting from the brake.

"Who is that?" I asked; "the straight slim woman in gray, with the white veil twisted round her felt hat?"

"Mrs. Saltillo," he answered; "wife of 'El Bolero' Saltillo, don't you know. Mighty pretty woman, if she is a little stiffish and set up."

Then I had not been mistaken! "Is Enriquez — is her husband — here?" I asked quickly.

The man laughed. "I reckon not. This is the place for other people's husbands, don't you know."

Alas! I *did* know; and as there flashed upon me all the miserable scandals and gossip connected with this reckless, frivolous caravansary, I felt like resenting his suggestion. But my companion's next words were more significant: —

"Besides, if what they say is true, Saltillo would n't be very popular here."

"I don't understand," I said quickly.

"Why, after all that row he had with the El Bolero Company."

"I never heard of any row," I said, in astonishment.

The broker laughed incredulously. "Come! and *you* a newspaper man! Well, maybe they *did* try to hush it up, and keep it out of the papers, on account of the stock. But it seems he got up a reg'lar shindy with the board, one day; called 'em thieves and swindlers, and allowed he was disgracing himself as a Spanish hidalgo by having anything to do with 'em. Talked, they say, about Charles V. of Spain, or some other royal galoot, giving his ancestors the land in trust! Clean off his head, I reckon. Then shunted himself off the company, and sold out. You can guess he would n't be very popular around here, with Jim Bestley, there," pointing to the capitalist who had driven the brake, "who used to be on the board with him. No, sir. He was either lying low for something, or was off his head. Think of his throwing up a place like that!"

"Nonsense!" I said indignantly. "He is mercurial, and has the quick impulsiveness of his race, but I believe him as sane

as any who sat with him on the board. There must be some mistake, or you have n't got the whole story." Nevertheless, I did not care to discuss an old friend with a mere acquaintance, and I felt secretly puzzled to account for his conduct, in the face of his previous cleverness in manipulating the El Bolero, and the undoubted fascination he had previously exercised over the stockholders. The story had, of course, been garbled in repetition. I had never before imagined what might be the effect of Enriquez's peculiar eccentricities upon matter-of-fact people, — I had found them only amusing, — and the broker's suggestion annoyed me. However, Mrs. Saltillo was here in the hotel, and I should, of course, meet her. Would she be as frank with me?

I was disappointed at not finding her in the drawing-room or on the veranda; and the heat being still unusually oppressive, I strolled out toward the redwoods, hesitating for a moment in the shade before I ran the fiery gauntlet of the garden. To my surprise, I had scarcely passed the giant sentinels on its outskirts before I found that, from some unusual condition of the atmosphere, the cold undercurrent of air which

generally drew through these pillared aisles was withheld that afternoon; it was absolutely hotter than in the open, and the wood was charged throughout with the acrid spices of the pine. I turned back to the hotel, reascended to my bedroom, and threw myself in an armchair by the open window. My room was near the end of a wing; the corner room at the end was next to mine, on the same landing. Its closed door, at right angles to my open one, gave upon the staircase, but was plainly visible from where I sat. I remembered being glad that it was shut, as it enabled me without offense to keep my own door open.

The house was very quiet. The leaves of a catalpa, across the roadway, hung motionless. Somebody yawned on the veranda below. I threw away my half-finished cigar, and closed my eyes. I think I had not lost consciousness for more than a few seconds before I was awakened by the shaking and thrilling of the whole building. As I staggered to my feet, I saw the four pictures hanging against the wall swing outwardly from it on their cords, and my door swing back against the wall. At the same moment, acted upon by the same potential im-

pulse, the door of the end room in the hall, opposite the stairs, also swung open. In that brief moment I had a glimpse of the interior of the room, of two figures, a man and a woman, the latter clinging to her companion in abject terror. It was only for an instant, for a second thrill passed through the house, the pictures clattered back against the wall, the door of the end room closed violently on its strange revelation, and my own door swung back also. Apprehensive of what might happen, I sprang toward it, but only to arrest it an inch or two before it should shut, when, as my experience had taught me, it might stick by the subsidence of the walls. But it did stick ajar, and remained firmly fixed in that position. From the clattering of the knob of the other door, and the sound of hurried voices behind it, I knew that the same thing had happened there when that door had fully closed.

I was familiar enough with earthquakes to know that, with the second shock or subsidence of the earth, the immediate danger was passed, and so I was able to note more clearly what else was passing. There was the usual sudden stampede of hurrying feet, the solitary oath and scream, the half-hyster-

ical laughter, and silence. Then the tumult was reawakened to the sound of high voices, talking all together, or the impatient calling of absentees in halls and corridors. Then I heard the quick swish of female skirts on the staircase, and one of the fair guests knocked impatiently at the door of the end room, still immovably fixed. At the first knock there was a sudden cessation of the hurried whisperings and turning of the door-knob.

"Mrs. Saltillo, are you there? Are you frightened?" she called.

"Mrs. Saltillo"! It was *she*, then, who was in the room! I drew nearer my door, which was still fixed ajar. Presently a voice, — Mrs. Saltillo's voice, — with a constrained laugh in it, came from behind the door: "Not a bit. I 'll come down in a minute."

"Do," persisted the would-be intruder. "It 's all over now, but we 're all going out into the garden; it 's safer."

"All right," answered Mrs. Saltillo. "Don't wait, dear. I 'll follow. Run away, now."

The visitor, who was evidently still nervous, was glad to hurry away, and I heard her retreating step on the staircase. The

rattling of the door began again, and at last it seemed to yield to a stronger pull, and opened sufficiently to allow Mrs. Saltillo to squeeze through. I withdrew behind my door. I fancied that it creaked as she passed, as if, noticing it ajar, she had laid an inquiring hand upon it. I waited, but she was not followed by any one. I wondered if I had been mistaken. I was going to the bell-rope to summon assistance to move my own door when a sudden instinct withheld me. If there was any one still in that room, he might come from it just as the servant answered my call, and a public discovery would be unavoidable. I was right. In another instant the figure of a man, whose face I could not discern, slipped out of the room, passed my door, and went stealthily down the staircase.

Convinced of this, I resolved not to call public attention to my being in my own room at the time of the incident; so I did not summon any one, but, redoubling my efforts, I at last opened the door sufficiently to pass out, and at once joined the other guests in the garden. Already, with characteristic recklessness and audacity, the earthquake was made light of; the only dic-

tate of prudence had resolved itself into a hilarious proposal to "camp out" in the woods all night, and have a "torch-light picnic." Even then preparations were being made for carrying tents, blankets, and pillows to the adjacent redwoods; dinner and supper, cooked at campfires, were to be served there on stumps of trees and fallen logs. The convulsion of nature had been used as an excuse for one of the wildest freaks of extravagance that Carquinez Springs had ever known. Perhaps that quick sense of humor which dominates the American male in exigencies of this kind kept the extravagances from being merely bizarre and grotesque, and it was presently known that the hotel and its ménage were to be appropriately burlesqued by some of the guests, who, attired as Indians, would personate the staff, from the oracular hotel proprietor himself down to the smart hotel clerk.

During these arrangements I had a chance of drawing near Mrs. Saltillo. I fancied she gave a slight start as she recognized me; but her greetings were given with her usual precision. "Have you been here long?" she asked.

"I have only just come," I replied laughingly; "in time for the shock."

"Ah, you felt it, then? I was telling these ladies that our eminent geologist, Professor Dobbs, assured me that these seismic disturbances in California have a very remote centre, and are seldom serious."

"It must be very satisfactory to have the support of geology at such a moment," I could not help saying, though I had not the slightest idea whose the figure was that I had seen, nor, indeed, had I recognized it among the guests. She did not seem to detect any significance in my speech, and I added: "And where is Enriquez? He would enjoy this proposed picnic to-night."

"Enriquez is at Salvatierra Rancho, which he lately bought from his cousin."

"And the baby? Surely, here is a chance for you to hang him up on a redwood to-night, in his cradle."

"The boy," said Mrs. Saltillo quickly, "is no longer in his cradle; he has passed the pupa state, and is now free to develop his own perfected limbs. He is with his father. I do not approve of children being submitted to the indiscriminate attentions of a hotel. I am here myself only for that

supply of ozone indicated for brain exhaustion."

She looked so pretty and prim in her gray dress, so like her old correct self, that I could not think of anything but her mental attitude, which did not, by the way, seem much like mental depression. Yet I was aware that I was getting no information of Enriquez's condition or affairs, unless the whole story told by the broker was an exaggeration. I did not, however, dare to ask more particularly.

"You remember Professor Dobbs?" she asked abruptly.

This recalled a suspicion awakened by my vision, so suddenly that I felt myself blushing. She did not seem to notice it, and was perfectly composed.

"I do remember him. Is he here?"

"He is; that is what makes it so particularly unfortunate for me. You see, after that affair of the board, and Enriquez's withdrawal, although Enriquez may have been a little precipitate in his energetic way, I naturally took my husband's part in public; for although we preserve our own independence inviolable, we believe in absolute confederation as against society."

"But what has Professor Dobbs to do with the board?" I interrupted.

"The professor was scientific and geological adviser to the board, and it was upon some report or suggestion of his that Enriquez took issue, against the sentiment of the board. It was a principle affecting Enriquez's Spanish sense of honor."

"Do tell me all about it," I said eagerly; "I am very anxious to know the truth."

"As I was not present at the time," said Mrs. Saltillo, rebuking my eagerness with a gentle frigidity, "I am unable to do so. Anything else would be mere hearsay, and more or less *ex parte*. I do not approve of gossip."

"But what did Enriquez tell you? You surely know that."

"*That*, being purely confidential, as between husband and wife, — perhaps I should say partner and partner, — of course you do not expect me to disclose. Enough that *I* was satisfied with it. I should not have spoken to you about it at all, but that, through myself and Enriquez, you are an acquaintance of the professor's, and I might save you the awkwardness of presenting yourself with him. Otherwise, although

you are a friend of Enriquez, it need not affect your acquaintance with the professor."

"Hang the professor!" I ejaculated. "I don't care a rap for *him*."

"Then I differ with you," said Mrs. Saltillo, with precision. "He is distinctly an able man, and one cannot but miss the contact of his original mind and his liberal teachings."

Here she was joined by one of the ladies, and I lounged away. I dare say it was very mean and very illogical, but the unsatisfactory character of this interview made me revert again to the singular revelation I had seen a few hours before. I looked anxiously for Professor Dobbs; but when I did meet him, with an indifferent nod of recognition, I found I could by no means identify him with the figure of her mysterious companion. And why should I suspect him at all, in the face of Mrs. Saltillo's confessed avoidance of him? Who, then, could it have been? I had seen them but an instant, in the opening and the shutting of a door. It was merely the shadowy bulk of a man that flitted past my door, after all. Could I have imagined the whole thing? Were my perceptive faculties — just aroused from slumber, too

— sufficiently clear to be relied upon? Would I not have laughed had Urania, or even Enriquez himself, told me such a story?

As I reëntered the hotel the clerk handed me a telegram. "There 's been a pretty big shake all over the country," he said eagerly. "Everybody is getting news and inquiries from their friends. Anything fresh?" He paused interrogatively as I tore open the envelope. The dispatch had been redirected from the office of the "Daily Excelsior." It was dated, "Salvatierra Rancho," and contained a single line: "Come and see your old uncle 'Ennery."

There was nothing in the wording of the message that was unlike Enriquez's usual light-hearted levity, but the fact that he should have *telegraphed* it to me struck me uneasily. That I should have received it at the hotel where his wife and Professor Dobbs were both staying, and where I had had such a singular experience, seemed to me more than a mere coincidence. An instinct that the message was something personal to Enriquez and myself kept me from imparting it to Mrs. Saltillo. After worrying half the night in our bizarre camp in

the redwoods, in the midst of a restless festivity which was scarcely the repose I had been seeking at Carquinez Springs, I resolved to leave the next day for Salvatierra Rancho. I remembered the rancho, — a low, golden-brown, adobe-walled quadrangle, sleeping like some monstrous ruminant in a hollow of the Contra Costa Range. I recalled, in the midst of this noisy picnic, the slumberous coolness of its long corridors and soundless courtyard, and hailed it as a relief. The telegram was a sufficient excuse for my abrupt departure. In the morning I left, but without again seeing either Mrs. Saltillo or the professor.

It was late the next afternoon when I rode through the *cañada* that led to the rancho. I confess my thoughts were somewhat gloomy, in spite of my escape from the noisy hotel; but this was due to the sombre scenery through which I had just ridden, and the monotonous russet of the leagues of wild oats. As I approached the rancho, I saw that Enriquez had made no attempt to modernize the old *casa*, and that even the garden was left in its lawless native luxuriance, while the rude tiled sheds near the walled corral contained the old farming implements,

unchanged for a century, even to the ox-carts, the wheels of which were made of a single block of wood. A few peons, in striped shirts and velvet jackets, were sunning themselves against a wall, and near them hung a half-drained *pellejo*, or goat-skin water-bag. The air of absolute shiftlessness must have been repellent to Mrs. Saltillo's orderly precision, and for a moment I pitied her. But it was equally inconsistent with Enriquez's enthusiastic ideas of American progress, and the extravagant designs he had often imparted to me of the improvements he would make when he had a fortune. I was feeling uneasy again, when I suddenly heard the rapid clack of unshod hoofs on a rocky trail that joined my own. At the same instant a horseman dashed past me at full speed. I had barely time to swerve my own horse aside to avoid a collision, yet in that brief moment I recognized the figure of Enriquez. But his face I should have scarcely known. It was hard and fixed. His upper lip and thin, penciled mustache were drawn up over his teeth, which were like a white gash in his dark face. He turned into the courtyard of the rancho. I put spurs to my horse,

and followed, in nervous expectation. He turned in his saddle as I entered. But the next moment he bounded from his horse, and, before I could dismount, flew to my side and absolutely lifted me from the saddle to embrace me. It was the old Enriquez again; his face seemed to have utterly changed in that brief moment.

"This is all very well, old chap," I said; "but do you know that you nearly ran me down, just now, with that infernal half-broken mustang? Do you usually charge the *casa* at that speed?"

"Pardon, my leetle brother! But here you shall slip up. The mustang is not *half*-broken; he is not broke at all! Look at his hoof — never have a shoe been there. For myself — attend me! When I rride alone, I think mooch; when I think mooch I think fast; my idea he go like a cannon-ball! Consequent, if I ride not thees horse like the cannon-ball, my thought *he* arrive first, and where are you? You get left! Believe me that I fly thees horse, thees old Mexican plug, and your de' uncle 'Ennery and his leetle old idea arrive all the same time, and on the instant."

It *was* the old Enriquez! I perfectly un-

derstood his extravagant speech and illustration, and yet for the first time I wondered if others did.

"Tak'-a-drink!" he said, all in one word. "You shall possess the old Bourbon or the rhum from the Santa Cruz! Name your poison, gentlemen!"

He had already dragged me up the steps from the *patio* to the veranda, and seated me before a small round table still covered with the chocolate equipage of the morning. A little dried-up old Indian woman took it away, and brought the spirits and glasses.

"*Mirar* the leetle old one!" said Enriquez, with unflinching gravity. "Consider her, Pancho, to the bloosh! She is not truly an Aztec, but she is of years one hundred and one, and *lifs!* Possibly she haf not the beauty which ravishes, which devastates. But she shall attent you to the hot water, to the bath. Thus shall you be protect, my leetle brother, from scandal."

"Enriquez," I burst out suddenly, "tell me about yourself. Why did you leave the El Bolero board? What was the row about?"

Enriquez's eyes for a moment glittered; then they danced as before.

"Ah," he said, "you have heard?"

"Something; but I want to know the truth from you."

He lighted a cigarette, lifted himself backward into a grass hammock, on which he sat, swinging his feet. Then, pointing to another hammock, he said: "Tranquillize yourself there. I will relate; but, truly, it ees nothing."

He took a long pull at his cigarette, and for a few moments seemed quietly to exude smoke from his eyes, ears, nose, even his finger-ends — everywhere, in fact, but his mouth. That and his mustache remained fixed. Then he said slowly, flicking away the ashes with his little finger: —

"First you understand, friend Pancho, that *I* make no row. The other themself make the row, the shindig. They make the dance, the howl, the snap of the finger, the oath, the 'Helen blazes,' the 'Wot the devil,' the 'That be d—d,' the bad language; they themselves finger the revolver, advance the bowie-knife, throw off the coat, square off, and say 'Come on.' I remain as you see me now, little brother — tranquil." He lighted another cigarette, made his position more comfortable in the ham-

nock, and resumed: "The Professor Dobbs, who is the geologian of the company, made a report for which he got two thousand dollar. But thees report — look you, friend Pancho — he is not good for the mine. For in the hole in the ground the Professor Dobbs have found a 'hoss.'"

"A what?" I asked.

"A hoss," repeated Enriquez, with infinite gravity. "But not, leetle Pancho, the hoss that run, the hoss that buck-jump, but what the miner call a 'hoss,' a something that rear up in the vein and stop him. You pick around the hoss; you pick under him; sometimes you find the vein, sometimes you do not. The hoss rear up, and remain! Eet ees not good for the mine. The board say, 'D—— the hoss!' 'Get rid of the hoss.' 'Chuck out the hoss.' Then they talk together, and one say to the Professor Dobbs: 'Eef you cannot thees hoss remove from the mine, you can take him out of the report.' He look to me, thees professor. I see nothing; I remain tranquil. Then the board say: 'Thees report with the hoss in him is worth two thousand dollar, but *without* the hoss he is worth five thousand dollar. For the stockholder is frighted of the

rearing hoss. It is of a necessity that the stockholder should remain tranquil. Without the hoss the report is good; the stock shall errise; the director shall sell out, and leave the stockholder the hoss to play with.' The professor he say, 'Al-right;' he scratch out the hoss, sign his name, and get a check for three thousand dollar."

"Then I errise — so!" He got up from the hammock, suiting the action to the word, and during the rest of his narrative, I honestly believe, assumed the same attitude and deliberate intonation he had exhibited at the board. I could even fancy I saw the reckless, cynical faces of his brother directors turned upon his grim, impassive features. "I am tranquil· I smoke my cigarette. I say that 'or three hundred year my family have held the land of thees mine; that it pass from father to son, and from son to son; it pass by gift, it pass by grant, but that *nevarre there pass a lie with it!* I say it was a gift by a Spanish Christian king to a Christian hidalgo for the spread of the gospel, and not for the cheat and the swindle! I say that this mine was worked by the slave, and by the mule, by the ass, but never by the cheat and swindler. I say

that if they have struck the hoss in the mine, they have struck a hoss *in the land*, a Spanish hoss; a hoss that have no bridle worth five thousand dollar in his mouth, but a hoss to rear, and a hoss that cannot be struck out by a Yankee geologian; and that hoss is Enriquez Saltillo!"

He paused, and laid aside his cigarette. "Then they say, 'Dry up,' and 'Sell out;' and the great bankers say, 'Name your own price for your stock, and resign.' And I say, 'There is not enough gold in your bank, in your San Francisco, in the mines of California, that shall buy a Spanish gentleman. When I leave, I leave the stock at my back; I shall take it, nevarre!' Then the banker he say, 'And you will go and blab, I suppose?' And then, Pancho, I smile, I pick up my mustache — so! and I say: 'Pardon, señor, you haf mistake. The Saltillo haf for three hundred year no stain, no blot upon him. Eet is not now — the last of the race — who shall confess that he haf sit at a board of disgrace and dishonor!' And then it is that the band begin to play, and the animals stand on their hind leg and waltz, and behold, the row he haf begin!"

I ran over to him, and fairly hugged him. But he put me aside with a gentle and philosophical calm. "Ah, eet is nothing, Pancho. It is, believe me, all the same a hundred years to come, and where are you, then? The earth he turn round, and then come *el temblor*, the earthquake, and there you are! Bah! eet is not of the board that I have asked you to come; it is something else I would tell you. Go and wash yourself of thees journey, my leetle brother, as I have" — looking at his narrow, brown, well-bred hands — "wash myself of the board. Be very careful of the leetle old woman, Pancho; do not wink to her of the eye! Consider, my leetle brother, for one hundred and one year he haf been as a nun, a saint! Disturb not her tranquillity."

Yes, it was the old Enriquez; but he seemed graver, — if I could use that word of one of such persistent gravity; only his gravity heretofore had suggested a certain irony rather than a melancholy which I now fancied I detected. And what was this "something else" he was to "tell me later"? Did it refer to Mrs. Saltillo? I had purposely waited for him to speak of her, before I should say anything of my visit to

Carquinez Springs. I hurried through my ablutions in the hot water, brought in a bronze jar on the head of the centenarian handmaid; and even while I was smiling over Enriquez's caution regarding this aged Ruth, I felt I was getting nervous to hear his news.

I found him in his sitting-room, or study, — a long, low apartment with small, deep windows like embrasures in the outer adobe wall, but glazed in lightly upon the veranda. He was sitting quite abstractedly, with a pen in his hand, before a table, on which a number of sealed envelopes were lying. He looked *so* formal and methodical for Enriquez.

"You like the old *casa*, Pancho?" he said in reply to my praise of its studious and monastic gloom. "Well, my leetle brother, some day that is fair — who knows? — it may be at your *disposicion;* not of our politeness, but of a truth, friend Pancho. For, if I leave it to my wife" — it was the first time he had spoken of her — "for my leetle child," he added quickly, "I shall put in a bond, an *obligacion*, that my friend Pancho shall come and go as he will."

"The Saltillos are a long-lived race," I

laughed. "I shall be a gray-haired man, with a house and family of my own by that time." But I did not like the way he had spoken.

"*Quien sabe?*" he only said, dismissing the question with the national gesture. After a moment he added: "I shall tell you something that is strrange, so strrange that you shall say, like the banker say, 'Thees Enriquez, he ees off his head; he ees a crank, a *lunatico;*' but it ees a *fact;* believe me, I have said!"

He rose, and, going to the end of the room, opened a door. It showed a pretty little room, femininely arranged in Mrs. Saltillo's refined taste. "Eet is pretty; eet is the room of my wife. *Bueno!* attend me now." He closed the door, and walked back to the table. "I have sit here and write when the earthquake arrive. I have feel the shock, the grind of the walls on themselves, the tremor, the stagger, and — that — door — he swing open!"

"The door?" I said, with a smile that I felt was ghastly.

"Comprehend me," he said quickly; "it ees not *that* which ees strrange. The wall lift, the lock slip, the door he fell open; it

is frequent; it comes so ever when the earthquake come. But eet is not my wife's room I see; it is *another room*, a room I know not. My wife Urania, she stand there, of a fear, of a tremble; she grasp, she cling to some one. The earth shake again; the door shut. I jump from my table; I shake and tumble to the door. I fling him open. *Maravilloso!* it is the room of my wife again. She is *not* there; it is empty; it is nothing!"

I felt myself turning hot and cold by turns. I was horrified, and — and I blundered. "And who was the other figure?" I gasped.

"Who?" repeated Enriquez, with a pause, a fixed look at me, and a sublime gesture. "Who *should* it be, but myself, Enriquez Saltillo?"

A terrible premonition that this was a chivalrous *lie*, that it was *not* himself he had seen, but that our two visions were identical, came upon me. "After all," I said, with a fixed smile, "if you could imagine you saw your wife, you could easily imagine you saw yourself too. In the shock of the moment you thought of *her* naturally, for then she would as naturally seek your pro-

tection. You have written for news of her?"

"No," said Enriquez quietly.

"No?" I repeated amazedly.

"You understand, Pancho! Eef it was the trick of my eyes, why should I affright her for the thing that is not? If it is the truth, and it arrive to *me*, as a warning, why shall I affright her before it come?"

"Before *what* comes? What is it a warning of?" I asked impetuously.

"That we shall be separated! That *I* go, and she do not."

To my surprise, his dancing eyes had a slight film over them. "I don't understand you," I said awkwardly.

"Your head is not of a level, my Pancho. Thees earthquake he remain for only ten seconds, and he fling open the door. If he remain for twenty seconds, he fling open the wall, the hoose toomble, and your friend Enriquez is feenish."

"Nonsense!" I said. "Professor — I mean the geologists — say that the centre of disturbance of these Californian earthquakes is some far-away point in the Pacific and there never will be any serious convulsions here."

"Ah, the geologist," said Enriquez gravely, "understand the hoss that rear in the mine, and the five thousand dollar, believe me, no more. He haf lif here three year. My family haf lif here three hundred. My grandfather saw the earth swallow the church of San Juan Baptista."

I laughed, until, looking up, I was shocked to see for the first time that his dancing eyes were moist and shining. But almost instantly he jumped up, and declared that I had not seen the garden and the corral, and, linking his arm in mine, swept me like a whirlwind into the *patio*. For an hour or two he was in his old invincible spirits. I was glad I had said nothing of my visit to Carquinez Springs and of seeing his wife; I determined to avoid it as long as possible; and as he did not again refer to her, except in the past, it was not difficult. At last he infected me with his extravagance, and for a while I forgot even the strangeness of his conduct and his confidences. We walked and talked together as of old. I understood and enjoyed him perfectly, and it was not strange that in the end I began to believe that this strange revelation was a bit of his extravagant acting,

got up to amuse me. The coincidence of his story with my own experience was not, after all, such a wonderful thing, considering what must have been the nervous and mental disturbance produced by the earthquake. We dined together, attended only by Pedro, an old half-caste body-servant. It was easy to see that the household was carried on economically, and, from a word or two casually dropped by Enriquez, it appeared that the rancho and a small sum of money were all that he retained from his former fortune when he left the El Bolero. The stock he kept intact, refusing to take the dividend upon it until that collapse of the company should occur which he confidently predicted, when he would make good the swindled stockholders. I had no reason to doubt his perfect faith in this.

The next morning we were up early for a breezy gallop over the three square miles of Enriquez's estate. I was astounded, when I descended to the *patio*, to find Enriquez already mounted, and carrying before him, astride of the horn of his saddle, a small child, — the identical papoose of my memorable first visit. But the boy was no longer swathed and bandaged, although, for

security, his plump little body was engirt by the same sash that encircled his father's own waist. I felt a stirring of self-reproach; I had forgotten all about him! To my suggestion that the exercise might be fatiguing to him, Enriquez shrugged his shoulders: —

"Believe me, no! He is ever with me when I go on the *pasear*. He is not too yonge. For he shall learn 'to rride, to shoot, and to speak the truth,' even as the Persian chile. Eet ees all I can gif to him."

Nevertheless, I think the boy enjoyed it, and I knew he was safe with such an accomplished horseman as his father. Indeed, it was a fine sight to see them both careering over the broad plain, Enriquez with jingling spurs and whirling *riata*, and the boy, with a face as composed as his father's, and his tiny hand grasping the end of the flapping rein with a touch scarcely lighter than the skillful rider's own. It was a lovely morning; though warm and still, there was a faint haze — a rare thing in that climate — on the distant range. The sun-baked soil, arid and thirsty from the long summer drought, and cracked into long fissures, broke into puffs of dust, with a slight deto-

nation like a pistol-shot, at each stroke of our pounding hoofs. Suddenly my horse swerved in full gallop, almost lost his footing, "broke," and halted with braced fore feet, trembling in every limb. I heard a shout from Enriquez at the same instant, and saw that he too had halted about a hundred paces from me, with his hand uplifted in warning, and between us a long chasm in the dry earth, extending across the whole field. But the trembling of the horse continued until it communicated itself to me. *I* was shaking, too, and, looking about for the cause, when I beheld the most weird and remarkable spectacle I had ever witnessed. The whole *llano*, or plain, stretching to the horizon-line, was *distinctly undulating!* The faint haze of the hills was repeated over its surface, as if a dust had arisen from some grinding displacement of the soil. I threw myself from my horse, but the next moment was fain to cling to him, as I felt the thrill under my very feet. Then there was a pause, and I lifted my head to look for Enriquez. He was nowhere to be seen! With a terrible recollection of the fissure that had yawned between us, I sprang to the saddle again, and spurred

the frightened beast toward that point. *But it was gone, too!* I rode backward and forward repeatedly along the line where I had seen it only a moment before. The plain lay compact and uninterrupted, without a crack or fissure. The dusty haze that had arisen had passed as mysteriously away; the clear outline of the valley returned; the great field was empty!

Presently I was aware of the sound of galloping hoofs. I remembered then — what I had at first forgotten — that a few moments before we had crossed an *arroyo*, or dried bed of a stream, depressed below the level of the field. How foolish that I had not remembered! He had evidently sought that refuge; there were his returning hoofs. I galloped toward it, but only to meet a frightened *vaquero*, who had taken that avenue of escape to the rancho.

"Did you see Don Enriquez?" I asked impatiently.

I saw that the man's terror was extreme, and his eyes were staring in their sockets. He hastily crossed himself: —

"Ah, God, yes!"

"Where is he?" I demanded.

"Gone!"

"Where?"

He looked at me with staring, vacant eyes, and, pointing to the ground, said in Spanish: "He has returned to the land of his fathers!"

We searched for him that day and the next, when the country was aroused and his neighbors joined in a quest that proved useless. Neither he nor his innocent burden was ever seen again of men. Whether he had been engulfed by mischance in some unsuspected yawning chasm in that brief moment, or had fulfilled his own prophecy by deliberately erasing himself for some purpose known only to himself, no one ever knew. His country-people shook their heads and said "it was like a Saltillo." And the few among his retainers who knew him and loved him, whispered still more ominously: "He will yet return to his land to confound the *Americanos*."

Yet the widow of Enriquez did *not* marry Professor Dobbs. But she too disappeared from California, and years afterward I was told that she was well known to the ingenuous Parisians as the usual wealthy widow "from South America."

FROM SAND HILL TO PINE

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FROM SAND HILL TO PINE

A NIECE OF SNAPSHOT HARRY'S

I

THERE was a slight jarring through the whole frame of the coach, a grinding and hissing from the brakes, and then a sudden jolt as the vehicle ran upon and recoiled from the taut pole-straps of the now arrested horses. The murmur of a voice in the road was heard, followed by the impatient accents of Yuba Bill, the driver.

"Wha-a-t? Speak up, can't ye?"

Here the voice uttered something in a louder key, but equally unintelligible to the now interested and fully awakened passengers.

One of them dropped the window nearest him and looked out. He could see the faint glistening of a rain-washed lantern near the wheelers' heads, mingling with the stronger

coach lights, and the glow of a distant open cabin door through the leaves and branches of the roadside. The sound of falling rain on the roof, a soft swaying of wind-tossed trees, and an impatient movement on the box-seat were all they heard. Then Yuba Bill's voice rose again, apparently in answer to the other.

"Why, that 's half a mile away!"

"Yes, but ye might have dropped onto it in the dark, and it 's all on the down grade," responded the strange voice more audibly.

The passengers were now thoroughly aroused.

"What 's up, Ned?" asked the one at the window of the nearest of two figures that had descended from the box.

"Tree fallen across the road," said Ned, the expressman, briefly.

"I don't see no tree," responded the passenger, leaning out of the window towards the obscurity ahead.

"Now, that 's onfortnit!" said Yuba Bill grimly; "but ef any gentleman will only lend him an opery glass, mebbe he can see round the curve and over the other side o' the hill where it is. Now, then," address-

ing the stranger with the lantern, "bring along your axes, can't ye?"

"Here 's one, Bill," said an officious outside passenger, producing the instrument he had taken from its strap in the boot. It was the "regulation" axe, beautifully shaped, highly polished, and utterly ineffective, as Bill well knew.

"We ain't cuttin' no kindlin's," he said scornfully; then he added brusquely to the stranger: "Fetch out your biggest wood axe — you 've got one, ye know — and look sharp."

"I don't think Bill need be so d—d rough with the stranger, considering he 's saved the coach a very bad smash," suggested a reflective young journalist in the next seat. "He talks as if the man was responsible."

"He ain't quite sure if that is n't the fact," said the express messenger, in a lowered voice.

"Why? What do you mean?" clamored the others excitedly.

"Well — *this* is about the spot where the up coach was robbed six months ago," returned the messenger.

"Dear me!" said the lady in the back seat, rising with a half hysterical laugh, "had n't we better get out before they come?"

"There is not the slightest danger, madam," said a quiet, observant man, who had scarcely spoken before, "or the express-man would not have told us; nor would he, I fancy, have left his post beside the treasure on the box."

The slight sarcasm implied in this was enough to redden the expressman's cheek in the light of the coach lamp which Yuba Bill had just unshipped and brought to the window. He would have made some tart rejoinder, but was prevented by Yuba Bill addressing the passengers: "Ye 'll have to put up with *one* light, I reckon, until we 've got this job finished."

"How long will it last, Bill?" asked the man nearest the window.

"Well," said Bill, with a contemptuous glance at the elegant coach axe he was carrying in his hand, "considerin' these purty first-class highly expensive hash choppers that the kempany furnishes us, I reckon it may take an hour."

"But is there no place where we can wait?" asked the lady anxiously. "I see a light in that house yonder."

"Ye might try it, though the kempany, as a rule, ain't in the habit o' makin' social calls there," returned Bill, with a certain grim significance. Then, turning to some outside passengers, he added, "Now, then! them ez is goin' to help me tackle that tree, trot down! I reckon that blitherin' idiot" (the stranger with the lantern, who had disappeared) "will have sense enough to fetch us some ropes with his darned axe."

The passengers thus addressed, apparently miners and workingmen, good humoredly descended, all except one, who seemed disinclined to leave the much coveted seat on the box beside the driver.

"I 'll look after your places and keep my own," he said, with a laugh, as the others followed Bill through the dripping rain. When they had disappeared, the young journalist turned to the lady.

"If you would really like to go to that house, I will gladly accompany you." It was possible that in addition to his youthful chivalry there was a little youthful resent-

ment of Yuba Bill's domineering prejudices in his attitude. However, the quiet, observant passenger lifted a look of approval to him, and added, in his previous level, half contemptuous tone: —

"You 'll be quite as well there as here, madam, and there is certainly no reason for your stopping in the coach when the driver chooses to leave it."

The passengers looked at each other. The stranger spoke with authority, and Bill had certainly been a little arbitrary!

"I 'll go too," said the passenger by the window. "And you 'll come, won't you, Ned?" he added to the express messenger. The young man hesitated; he was recently appointed, and as yet fresh to the business — but he was not to be taught his duty by an officious stranger! He resented the interference youthfully by doing the very thing he would have preferred *not* to do, and with assumed carelessness — yet feeling in his pocket to assure himself that the key of the treasure compartment was safe — turned to follow them.

"Won't *you* come too?" said the journalist, politely addressing the cynical passenger.

"No, I thank you! I 'll take charge of the coach," was the smiling rejoinder, as he settled himself more comfortably in his seat.

The little procession moved away in silence. Oddly enough, no one, except the lady, really cared to go, and two — the expressman and journalist — would have preferred to remain on the coach. But the national instinct of questioning any purely arbitrary authority probably was a sufficient impulse. As they neared the opened door of what appeared to be a four-roomed, unpainted, redwood boarded cabin, the passenger who had occupied the seat near the window said, —

"I 'll go first and sample the shanty."

He was not, however, so far in advance of them but that the others could hear quite distinctly his offhand introduction of their party on the threshold, and the somewhat lukewarm response of the inmates. "We thought we 'd just drop in and be sociable until the coach was ready to start again," he continued, as the other passengers entered. "This yer gentleman is Ned Brice, Adams & Co.'s expressman; this yer is

Frank Frenshaw, editor of the 'Mountain Banner;' this yer 's a lady, so it ain't necessary to give *her* name, I reckon — even if we knowed it! Mine 's Sam Hexshill, of Hexshill & Dobbs's Flour Mills, of Stockton, whar, ef you ever come that way, I 'll be happy to return the compliment and hospitality."

The room they had entered had little of comfort and brightness in it except the fire of pine logs which roared and crackled in the adobe chimney. The air would have been too warm but for the strong west wind and rain which entered the open door freely. There was no other light than the fire, and its tremulous and ever-changing brilliancy gave a spasmodic mobility to the faces of those turned towards it, or threw into stronger shadow the features that were turned away. Yet, by this uncertain light, they could see the figures of a man and two women. The man rose and, with a certain apathetic gesture that seemed to partake more of weariness and long suffering than positive discourtesy, tendered seats on chairs, boxes, and even logs to the self-invited guests. The stage party were surprised to see that

this man was the stranger who had held the lantern in the road.

"Ah! then you did n't go with Bill to help clear the road?" said the expressman surprisedly.

The man slowly drew up his tall, shambling figure before the fire, and then facing them, with his hands behind him, as slowly lowered himself again as if to bring his speech to the level of his hearers and give a lazier and more deliberate effect to his long-drawn utterance.

"Well — no!" he said slowly. "I — did n't — go — with — no — Bill — to — help — clear — the road! I — don't — reckon — *to* go — with — no — Bill — to — clear — *any* road! I 've just whittled this thing down to a pint, and it 's this — I ain't no stage kempany's nigger! So far as turnin' out and warnin' 'em agin goin' to smash over a fallen tree, and slap down into the cañon with a passel of innercent passengers, I 'm that much a white man, but I ain't no *nigger* to work clearing things away for 'em, nor I ain't no scrub to work beside 'em." He slowly straightened himself up again, and, with his former apathetic air,

looking down upon one of the women who was setting a coffee-pot on the coals, added, "But I reckon my old woman here kin give you some coffee and whiskey — ef you keer for it."

Unfortunately the young expressman was more loyal to Bill than diplomatic. "If Bill 's a little rough," he said, with a heightened color, "perhaps he has some excuse for it. You forget it 's only six months ago that this coach was 'held up' not a hundred yards from this spot."

The woman with the coffee-pot here faced about, stood up, and, either from design or some odd coincidence, fell into the same dogged attitude that her husband had previously taken, except that she rested her hands on her hips. She was prematurely aged, like many of her class, and her black, snake-like locks, twisting loose from her comb as she lifted her head, showed threads of white against the firelight. Then with slow and implacable deliberation she said:

"We 'forget'! Well! not much, sonny! We ain't forgot it, and we ain't goin' to forget it, neither! We ain't bin likely to forget it for any time the last six months. What

with visitations from the county constables, snoopin's round from 'Frisco detectives, droppin's-in from newspaper men, and yawpin's and starin's from tramps and strangers on the road — we have n't had a chance to disremember *much!* And when at last Hiram tackled the head stage agent at Marysville, and allowed that this yer pesterin' and persecutin' had got ter stop — what did that yer head agent tell him? Told him to 'shet his head,' and be thankful that his 'thievin' old shanty was n't burnt down around his ears!' Forget that six months ago the coach was held up near here? Not much, sonny — not much!"

The situation was embarrassing to the guests, as ordinary politeness called for some expression of sympathy with their gloomy hostess, and yet a selfish instinct of humanity warned them that there must be some foundation for this general distrust of the public. The journalist was troubled in his conscience; the expressman took refuge in an official reticence; the lady coughed slightly, and drew nearer to the fire with a vague but safe compliment to its brightness and comfort. It devolved upon Mr. Hecks-

hill, who felt the responsibility of his late airy introduction of the party, to boldly keep up his rôle, with an equally non-committal, light-hearted philosophy.

"Well, ma'am," he said, addressing his hostess, "it 's a queer world, and no man 's got *sabe* enough to say what 's the rights and wrongs o' anything. Some folks believe one thing and act upon it, and other folks think differently and act upon *that!* The only thing ye kin safely say is that *things is ez they be!* My rule here and at the mill is jest to take things ez I find 'em!"

It occurred to the journalist that Mr. Heckshill had the reputation, in his earlier career, of "taking" such things as unoccupied lands and timber "as he found them," without much reference to their actual owners. Apparently he was acting upon the same principle now, as he reached for the demijohn of whiskey with the ingenuous pleasantry, "Did somebody say whiskey, or did I dream it?"

But this did not satisfy Frenshaw. "I suppose," he said, ignoring Heckshill's diplomatic philosophy, "that you may have been the victim of some misunderstanding or

some unfortunate coincidence. Perhaps the company may have confounded you with your neighbors, who are believed to be friendly to the gang; or you may have made some injudicious acquaintances. Perhaps" —

He was stopped by a suppressed but not unmusical giggle, which appeared to come from the woman in the corner who had not yet spoken, and whose face and figure in the shadow he had previously overlooked. But he could now see that her outline was slim and graceful, and the contour of her head charming, — facts that had evidently not escaped the observation of the expressman and Mr. Heckshill, and that might have accounted for the cautious reticence of the one and the comfortable moralizing of the other.

The old woman cast an uneasy glance on the fair giggler, but replied to Frenshaw:

"That 's it! 'injerdishus acquaintances!' But just because we might happen to have friends, or even be sorter related to folks in another line o' business that ain't none o' ours, the kempany hain't no call to persecute *us* for it! S'pose we do happen to know some one like" —

"Spit it out, aunty, now you 've started in! *I* don't mind," said the fair giggler, now apparently casting off all restraint in an outburst of laughter.

"Well," said the old woman, with dogged desperation, "suppose, then, that that young girl thar is the niece of Snapshot Harry, who stopped the coach the last time" —

"And ain't ashamed of it, either!" interrupted the young girl, rising and disclosing in the firelight an audacious but wonderfully pretty face; "and supposing he *is* my uncle, that ain't any cause for their bedevilin' my poor old cousins Hiram and Sophy thar!" For all the indignation of her words, her little white teeth flashed mischievously in the dancing light, as if she rather enjoyed the embarrassment of her audience, not excluding her own relatives. Evidently cousin Sophy thought so too.

"It 's all very well for you to laugh, Flo, you limb!" she retorted querulously, yet with an admiring glance at the girl, "for ye know thar ain't a man dare touch ye even with a word; but it 's mighty hard on me and Hiram, all the same."

"Never you mind, Sophy dear," said the

girl, placing her hand half affectionately, half humorously on the old woman's shoulder; "mebbe I won't always be a discredit and a bother to you. Jest you hold your hosses, and wait until uncle Harry 'holds up' the next Pioneer Coach," — the dancing devil in her eyes glanced as if accidentally on the young expressman, — "and he 'll make a big enough pile to send me to Europe, and you 'll be quit o' me."

The embarrassment, suspiciousness, and uneasiness of the coach party here found relief in a half hysteric explosion of laughter, in which even the dogged Hiram and Sophy joined. It seemed as impossible to withstand the girl's invincible audacity as her beauty. She was quick to perceive her advantage, and, with a responsive laugh and a picturesque gesture of invitation, said: —

"Now that 's all settled, ye 'd better waltz in and have your whiskey and coffee afore the stage starts. Ye kin comfort yourselves that it ain't stolen or pizoned, even if it is served up to ye by Snapshot Harry's niece!" With another easy gesture she swung the demijohn over her arm, and, offering a tin cup to each of the men, filled them in turn.

The ice thus broken, or perhaps thus perilously skated over, the passengers were as profuse in their thanks and apologies as they had been constrained and artificial before. Heckshill and Frenshaw vied with each other for a glance from the audacious Flo. If their compliments partook of an extravagance that was at times ironical, the girl was evidently not deceived by it, but replied in kind. Only the expressman, who seemed to have fallen under the spell of her audacious glances, was uneasy at the license of the others, yet himself dumb towards her. The lady discreetly drew nearer to the fire, the old woman, and her coffee; Hiram subsided into his apathetic attitude by the fire.

A shout from the road at last proclaimed the return of Yuba Bill and his helpers. It had the singular effect of startling the party into a vague and uneasy consciousness of indiscretion, as if it had been the voice of the outer world of law and order, and their manner again became constrained. The leave-taking was hurried and perfunctory; the diplomatic Heckshill again lapsed into glittering generalities about "the best of friends parting." Only the expressman lingered for

a moment on the doorstep in the light of the fire and the girl's dancing eyes.

"I hope," he stammered, with a very youthful blush, "to come the next time — with — with — a better introduction."

"Uncle Harry's," she said, with a quick laugh and a mock curtsey, as she turned away.

Once out of hearing, the party broke into hurried comment and criticism of the scene they had just witnessed, and particularly of the fair actress who had played so important a part, averring their emphatic intention of wresting the facts from Yuba Bill at once, and cross-examining him closely; but oddly enough, reaching the coach and that redoubted individual, no one seemed to care to take the initiative, and they all scrambled hurriedly to their seats without a word. How far Yuba Bill's irritability and imperious haste contributed to this, or a fear that he might in turn catechise them kept them silent, no one knew. The cynically observant passenger was not there; he and the sole occupant of the box-seat, they were told, had joined the clearing party some moments before, and would be picked up by Yuba Bill later on.

Five minutes after Bill had gathered up the reins, they reached the scene of obstruction. The great pine-tree which had fallen from the steep bank above and stretched across the road had been partly lopped of its branches, divided in two lengths, which were now rolled to either side of the track, leaving barely space for the coach to pass. The huge vehicle "slowed up" as Yuba Bill skillfully guided his six horses through this narrow alley, whose tassels of pine, glistening with wet, brushed the panels and sides of the coach, and effectually excluded any view from its windows. Seen from the coach top, the horses appeared to be cleaving their way through a dark, shining olive sea, that parted before and closed behind them, as they slowly passed. The leaders were just emerging from it, and Bill was gathering up his slackened reins, when a peremptory voice called, "Halt!" At the same moment the coach lights flashed upon a masked and motionless horseman in the road. Bill made an impulsive reach for his whip, but in the same instant checked himself, reined in his horses with a suppressed oath, and sat perfectly rigid. Not

so the expressman, who caught up his rifle, but it was arrested by Bill's arm, and his voice in his ear!

"Too late! — we 're covered! — don't be a d—d fool!"

The inside passengers, still encompassed by obscurity, knew only that the stage had stopped. The "outsiders" knew, by experience, that they were covered by unseen guns in the wayside branches, and scarcely moved.

"I did n't think it was the square thing to stop you, Bill, till you 'd got through your work," said a masterful but not unpleasant voice, "and if you 'll just hand down the express box, I 'll pass you and the rest of your load through free. But as we 're both in a hurry, you 'd better look lively about it."

"Hand it down," said Bill gruffly to the expressman.

The expressman turned with a white cheek but blazing eyes to the compartment below his seat. He lingered, apparently in some difficulty with the lock of the compartment, but finally brought out the box and handed it to another armed and masked fig-

ure that appeared mysteriously from the branches beside the wheels.

"Thank you!" said the voice; "you can slide on now."

"And thank you for nothing," said Bill, gathering up his reins. "It 's the first time any of your kind had to throw down a tree to hold me up!"

"You 're lying, Bill! — though you don't know it," said the voice cheerfully. "Far from throwing down a tree to stop you, it was *I* sent word along the road to warn you from crashing down upon it, and sending you and your load to h—ll before your time! Drive on!"

The angry Bill waited for no second comment, but laying his whip over the backs of his team, drove furiously forward. So rapidly had the whole scene passed that the inside passengers knew nothing of it, and even those on the top of the coach roused from their stupor and inglorious inaction only to cling desperately to the terribly swaying coach as it thundered down the grade and try to keep their equilibrium. Yet, furious as was their speed, Yuba Bill could not help noticing that the expressman from time to

time cast a hurried glance behind him. Bill knew that the young man had shown readiness and nerve in the attack, although both were hopeless; yet he was so much concerned at his set white face and compressed lips that when, at the end of three miles' unabated speed, they galloped up to the first station, he seized the young man by the arm, and, as the clamor of the news they had brought rose around them, dragged him past the wondering crowd, caught a decanter from the bar, and, opening the door of a side room, pushed him into it and closed the door behind them.

"Look yar, Brice! Stop it! Quit it right thar!" he said emphatically, laying his large hand on the young fellow's shoulder. "Be a man! You 've shown you are one, green ez you are, for you had the sand in ye — the clear grit to-night, yet you 'd have been a dead man now, if I had n't stopped ye! Man! you had no show from the beginning! You 've done your level best to save your treasure, and I 'm your witness to the kempany, and proud of it, too! So shet your head and — and," pouring out a glass of whiskey, "swaller that!"

But Brice waved him aside with burning eyes and dry lips.

"You don't know it all, Bill!" he said, with a half choked voice.

"All what?"

"Swear that you 'll keep it a secret," he said feverishly, gripping Bill's arm in turn, "and I 'll tell you."

"Go on!"

"*The coach was robbed before that!*"

"Wot yer say?" ejaculated Bill.

"The treasure — a packet of greenbacks — had been taken from the box before the gang stopped us!"

"The h—ll, you say!"

"Listen! When you told me to hand down the box, I had an idea — a d—d fool one, perhaps — of taking that package out and jumping from the coach with it. I knew they would fire at me only; I might get away, but if they killed me, I 'd have done only my duty, and nobody else would have got hurt. But when I got to the box I found that the lock had been forced and the money was gone. I managed to snap the lock again before I handed it down. I thought they might discover it at once and chase us, but they did n't."

"And then thar war no greenbacks in the box that they took?" gasped Bill, with staring eyes.

"No!"

Bill raised his hand in the air as if in solemn adjuration, and then brought it down on his knee, doubling up in a fit of uncontrollable but perfectly noiseless laughter. "Oh, Lord!" he gasped, "hol' me afore I bust right open! Hush," he went on, with a jerk of his fingers towards the next room, "not a word o' this to any one! It's too much to keep, I know; it's nearly killing me! but we must swaller it ourselves! Oh, Jerusalem the Golden! Oh, Brice! Think o' that face o' Snapshot Harry's ez he opened that treasure box afore his gang in the brush! And he allers *so* keen and *so* easy and *so* cock sure! Created snakes! I'd go through this every trip for one sight of him as he just riz up from that box and cussed!" He again shook with inward convulsions till his face grew purple, and even the red came back to the younger man's cheek.

"But this don't bring the money back, Bill," said Brice gloomily.

Yuba Bill swallowed the glass of whiskey at a gulp, wiped his mouth and eyes, smothered a second explosion, and then gravely confronted Brice.

"When do you think it was taken, and how?"

"It must have been taken when I left the coach on the road and went over to that settler's cabin," said Brice bitterly. "Yet I believed everything was safe, and I left two men — both passengers — one inside and one on the box, that man who sat the other side of you."

"Jee whillikins!" ejaculated Bill, with his hand to his forehead, "the men I clean forgot to pick up in the road, and now I reckon they never intended to be picked up, either."

"No doubt a part of the gang," said Brice, with increased bitterness; "I see it all now."

"No!" said Bill decisively, "that ain't Snapshot Harry's style; he 's a clean fighter, with no underhand tricks. And I don't believe he threw down that tree, either. Look yer, sonny!" he added, suddenly laying his hand on Brice's shoulder, "a hundred to

one that that was the work of a couple o' d—d sneaks or traitors in that gang who kem along as passengers. I never took any stock in that coyote who paid extra for his box-seat."

Brice knew that Bill never looked kindly on any passenger who, by bribing the ticket agent, secured this favorite seat, which Bill felt was due to his personal friends and was in his own selection. He only returned gloomily: —

"I don't see what difference it makes to us which robber got the money."

"Ye don't," said Bill, raising his head, with a sudden twinkle in his eyes. "Then ye don't know Snapshot Harry. Do ye suppose he 's goin' to sit down and twiddle his thumbs with that skin game played on him? No, sir," he continued, with a thoughtful deliberation, drawing his fingers slowly through his long beard, "he spotted it — and smelt out the whole trick ez soon ez he opened that box, and that 's why he did n't foller us! He 'll hunt those sneak thieves into h—ll but what he 'll get 'em, and," he went on still more slowly, "by the livin' hokey! I reckon, sonny, that 's jest how ye 'll get your chance to chip in!"

"I don't understand," said Brice impatiently.

"Well," said Bill, with more provoking slowness, as if he were communing with himself rather than Brice, "Harry 's mighty proud and high toned, and to be given away like this has cut down into his heart, you bet. It ain't the money he 's thinkin' of; it 's this split in the gang — the loss of his power ez boss, ye see — and ef he could get hold o' them chaps he 'd let the money slide ez long ez they did n't get it. So you 've got a detective on your side that 's worth the whole police force of Californy! Ye never heard anything about Snapshot Harry, did ye?" asked Bill carelessly, raising his eyes to Brice's eager face.

The young man flushed slightly. "Very little," he said. At the same time a vision of the pretty girl in the settler's cabin flashed upon him with a new significance.

"He 's more than half white, in some ways," said Bill thoughtfully, "and they say he lives somewhere about here in a cabin in the bush, with a crippled sister and her darter, who both swear by him. It might n't be hard to find him — ef a man was dead set on it."

Brice faced about with determined eyes. "*I 'll do it*," he said quietly.

"Ye might," said Bill, still more deliberately stroking his beard, "mention my name, ef ye ever get to see him."

"Your name," ejaculated the astonished Brice.

"My name," repeated Bill calmly. "He knows it 's my bounden duty to kill him ef I get the chance, and I know that he 'd plug me full o' holes in a minit ef thar war a necessity for it. But in these yer affairs, sonny, it seems to be the understood thing by the kempany that I 'm to keep fiery young squirts like you, and chuckle-headed passengers like them" — jerking his thumb towards the other room — "from gettin' themselves killed by their rashness. So ontil the kempany fill the top o' that coach with men who ain't got any business to do *but* fightin' other men who ain't got any other business to do *but* to fight them — the odds are agin us! Harry has always acted square to me — that 's how I know he ain't in this sneak-thief business, and why he did n't foller us, suspectin' suthin', and I 've always acted square to him. All the same,

I 'd like ter hev seen his face when that box was opened! Lordy!" Here Bill again collapsed in his silent paroxysm of mirth. "Ye might tell him how I laughed!"

"I would hardly do that, Bill," said the young man, smiling in spite of himself. "But you 've given me an idea, and I 'll work it out."

Bill glanced at the young fellow's kindling eyes and flushing cheek, and nodded. "Well, rastle with that idea later on, sonny. I 'll fix you all right in my report to the kempany, but the rest you must work alone. I 've started out the usual posse, circus-ridin' down the road after Harry. He 'd be a rough customer to meet just now," continued Bill, with a chuckle, "ef thar was the ghost of a chance o' them comin up with him, for him and his gang is scattered miles away by this." He paused, tossed off another glass of whiskey, wiped his mouth, and saying to Brice, with a wink, "It 's about time to go and comfort them thar passengers," led the way through the crowded barroom into the stage office.

The spectacle of Bill's humorously satisfied face and Brice's bright eyes and heightened

color was singularly effective. The "inside" passengers, who had experienced neither the excitement nor the danger of the robbery, yet had been obliged to listen to the hair-breadth escapes of the others, pooh-poohed the whole affair, and even the "outsides" themselves were at last convinced that the robbery was a slight one, with little or no loss to the company. The clamor subsided almost as suddenly as it had arisen; the wiser passengers fashioned their attitude on the sang-froid of Yuba Bill, and the whole coach load presently rolled away as complacently as if nothing had happened.

II

The robbery furnished the usual amount of copy for the local press. There was the inevitable compliment to Yuba Bill for his well-known coolness; the conduct of the young expressman, "who, though new to the service, displayed an intrepidity that only succumbed to numbers," was highly commended, and even the passengers received their meed of praise, not forgetting the lady, "who accepted the incident with

the light-hearted pleasantry characteristic of the Californian woman." There was the usual allusion to the necessity of a Vigilance Committee to cope with this "organized lawlessness," but it is to be feared that the readers of "The Red Dog Clarion," however ready to lynch a horse thief, were of the opinion that rich stage express companies were quite able to take care of their own property.

It was with full cognizance of these facts and their uselessness to him that the next morning Mr. Ned Brice turned from the road where the coach had just halted on the previous night and approached the settler's cabin. If a little less sanguine than he was in Yuba Bill's presence, he was still doggedly inflexible in his design, whatever it might have been, for he had not revealed it even to Yuba Bill. It was his own; it was probably crude and youthful in its directness, but for that reason it was probably more convincing than the vacillations of older counsel.

He paused a moment at the closed door, conscious, however, of some hurried movement within which signified that his ap-

proach had been observed. The door was opened, and disclosed only the old woman. The same dogged expression was on her face as when he had last seen it, with the addition of querulous expectancy. In reply to his polite "Good-morning," she abruptly faced him with her hands still on the door.

"Ye kin stop right there! Ef yer want ter make any talk about this yar robbery, ye might ez well skedaddle to oncet, for we ain't 'takin' any' to-day!"

"I have no wish to talk about the robbery," said Brice quietly, "and as far as I can prevent it, you will not be troubled by any questions. If you doubt my word or the intentions of the company, perhaps you will kindly read that."

He drew from his pocket a still damp copy of "The Red Dog Clarion" and pointed to a paragraph.

"Wot 's that?" she said querulously, feeling for her spectacles.

"Shall I read it?"

"Go on."

He read it slowly aloud. I grieve to say it had been jointly concocted the night before at the office of the "Clarion" by him-

self and the young journalist — the latter's assistance being his own personal tribute to the graces of Miss Flo. It read as follows: —

"The greatest assistance was rendered by Hiram Tarbox, Esq., a resident of the vicinity, in removing the obstruction, which was, no doubt, the preliminary work of some of the robber gang, and in providing hospitality for the delayed passengers. In fact, but for the timely warning of Yuba Bill by Mr. Tarbox, the coach might have crashed into the tree at that dangerous point, and an accident ensued more disastrous to life and limb than the robbery itself."

The sudden and unmistakable delight that expanded the old woman's mouth was so convincing that it might have given Brice a tinge of remorse over the success of his stratagem, had he not been utterly absorbed in his purpose. "Hiram!" she shouted suddenly.

The old man appeared from some back door with a promptness that proved his near proximity, and glanced angrily at Brice until he caught sight of his wife's face. Then his anger changed to wonder.

"Read that again, young feller," she said exultingly.

Brice re-read the paragraph aloud for Mr. Tarbox's benefit.

"That 'ar 'Hiram Tarbox, Esquire,' means *you*, Hiram," she gasped, in delighted explanation.

Hiram seized the paper, read the paragraph himself, spread out the whole page, examined it carefully, and then a fatuous grin began slowly to extend itself over his whole face, invading his eyes and ears, until the heavy, harsh, dogged lines of his nostrils and jaws had utterly disappeared.

"B' gosh!" he said, "that 's square! Kin I keep it?"

"Certainly," said Brice. "I brought it for you."

"Is that all ye came for?" said Hiram, with sudden suspicion.

"No," said the young man frankly. Yet he hesitated a moment as he added, "I would like to see Miss Flora."

His hesitation and heightened color were more disarming to suspicion than the most elaborate and carefully prepared indifference. With their knowledge and pride in their

relative's fascinations they felt it could have but one meaning! Hiram wiped his mouth with his hand, assumed a demure expression, glanced at his wife, and answered: —

"She ain't here now."

Mr. Brice's face displayed his disappointment. But the true lover holds a talisman potent with old and young. Mrs. Tarbox felt a sneaking maternal pity for this suddenly stricken Strephon.

"She 's gone home," she added more gently — "went at sun-up this mornin'."

"Home," repeated Brice. "Where 's that?"

Mrs. Tarbox looked at her husband and hesitated. Then she said — a little in her old manner — "Her uncle's."

"Can you direct me the way there?" asked Brice simply.

The astonishment in their faces presently darkened into suspicion again. "Ef that 's your little game," began Hiram, with a lowering brow —

"I have no little game but to see her and speak with her," said Brice boldly. "I am alone and unarmed, as you see," he continued, pointing to his empty belt and small

dispatch bag slung on his shoulder, "and certainly unable to do any one any harm. I am willing to take what risks there are. And as no one knows of my intention, nor of my coming here, whatever might happen to me, no one need know it. You would be safe from questioning."

There was that hopeful determination in his manner that overrode their resigned doggedness. "Ef we knew how to direct you thar," said the old woman cautiously, "ye 'd be killed outer hand afore ye even set eyes on the girl. The house is in a holler with hills kept by spies; ye 'd be a dead man as soon as ye crossed its boundary."

"Wot do *you* know about it?" interrupted her husband quickly, in querulous warning. "Wot are ye talkin' about?"

"You leave me alone, Hiram! I ain't goin' to let that young feller get popped off without a show, or without knowin' jest wot he 's got to tackle, nohow ye kin fix it! And can't ye see he 's bound to go, whatever ye says?"

Mr. Tarbox saw this fact plainly in Brice's eyes, and hesitated.

"The most that I kin tell ye," he said

gloomily, "is the way the gal takes when she goes from here, but how far it is, or if it ain't a blind, I can't swar, for I hev n't bin thar myself, and Harry never comes here but on an off night, when the coach ain't runnin' and thar 's no travel." He stopped suddenly and uneasily, as if he had said too much.

"Thar ye go, Hiram, and ye talk of others gabblin'! So ye might as well tell the young feller how that thar ain't but one way, and that 's the way Harry takes, too, when he comes yer oncet in an age to talk to his own flesh and blood, and see a Christian face that ain't agin him!"

Mr. Tarbox was silent. "Ye know whar the tree was thrown down on the road," he said at last.

"Yes."

"The mountain rises straight up on the right side of the road, all hazel brush and thorn — whar a goat could n't climb."

"Yes."

"But that 's a lie! for thar 's a little trail, not a foot wide, runs up from the road for a mile, keepin' it in view all the while, but bein' hidden by the brush. Ye kin see every-

thing from thar, and hear a teamster spit on the road."

"Go on," said Brice impatiently.

"Then it goes up and over the ridge, and down the other side into a little gulch until it comes to the cañon of the North Fork, where the stage road crosses over the bridge high up. The trail winds round the bank of the Fork and comes out on the *left* side of the stage road about a thousand feet below it. That 's the valley and hollow whar Harry lives, and that 's the only way it can be found. For all along the *left* of the stage road is a sheer pitch down that thousand feet, whar no one kin git up or down."

"I understand," said Brice, with sparkling eyes. "I 'll find my way all right."

"And when ye git thar, look out for yourself!" put in the woman earnestly. "Ye may have regular greenhorn's luck and pick up Flo afore ye cross the boundary, for she 's that bold that when she gets lonesome o' stayin' thar she goes wanderin' out o' bounds."

"Hev ye any weppin, — any shootin'-iron about ye?" asked Tarbox, with a latent suspicion.

The young man smiled, and again showed his empty belt. "None!" he said truthfully.

"I ain't sure ef that ain't the safest thing arter all with a shot like Harry," remarked the old man grimly. "Well, so long!" he added, and turned away.

It was clearly a leave-taking, and Brice, warmly thanking them both, returned to the road.

It was not far to the scene of the obstruction, yet but for Tarbox's timely hint, the little trail up the mountain side would have escaped his observation. Ascending, he soon found himself creeping along a narrow ledge of rock, hidden from the road that ran fifty yards below by a thick network growth of thorn and bramble, which still enabled him to see its whole parallel length. Perilous in the extreme to any hesitating foot, at one point, directly above the obstruction, the ledge itself was missing — broken away by the fall of the tree from the forest crest higher up. For an instant Brice stood dizzy and irresolute before the gap. Looking down for a foothold, his eye caught the faint imprint of a woman's shoe on a clayey

rock projecting midway of the chasm. It must have been the young girl's footprint made that morning, for the narrow toe was pointed in the direction she would go! Where *she* could pass should he shrink from going? Without further hesitation he twined his fingers around the roots above him, and half swung, half pulled himself along until he once more felt the ledge below him.

From time to time, as he went on along the difficult track, the narrow little toe-print pointed the way to him, like an arrow through the wilds. It was a pleasant thought, and yet a perplexing one. Would he have undertaken this quest just to see her? Would he be content with that if his other motive failed? For as he made his way up to the ridge he was more than once assailed by doubts of the practical success of his enterprise. In the excitement of last night, and even the hopefulness of the early morning, it seemed an easy thing to persuade the vain and eccentric highwayman that their interests might be identical, and to convince him that his, Brice's, assistance to recover the stolen greenbacks and insure the punishment

of the robber, with the possible addition of a reward from the express company, would be an inducement for them to work together. The risks that he was running seemed to his youthful fancy to atone for any defects in his logic or his plans. Yet as he crossed the ridge, leaving the civilized highway behind him, and descended the narrow trail, which grew wilder at each step, his arguments seemed no longer so convincing. He now hurried forward, however, with a feverish haste to anticipate the worst that might befall him.

The trail grew more intricate in the deep ferns; the friendly little footprint had vanished in this primeval wilderness. As he pushed through the gorge, he could hear at last the roar of the North Fork forcing its way through the cañon that crossed the gorge at right angles. At last he reached its current, shut in by two narrow precipitous walls that were spanned five hundred feet above by the stage road over a perilous bridge. As he approached the gloomy cañon, he remembered that the river, seen from above, seemed to have no banks, but to have cut its way through the solid rock.

He found, however, a faint ledge made by caught driftwood from the current and the débris of the overhanging cliffs. Again the narrow footprint on the ooze was his guide. At last, emerging from the cañon, a strange view burst upon his sight. The river turned abruptly to the right, and, following the mountain side, left a small hollow completely walled in by the surrounding heights. To his left was the ridge he had descended from on the other side, and he now understood the singular detour he had made. He was on the other side of the stage road also, which ran along the mountain shelf a thousand feet above him. The wall, a sheer cliff, made the hollow inaccessible from that side. Little hills covered with buckeye encompassed it. It looked like a sylvan retreat, and yet was as secure in its isolation and approaches as the outlaw's den that it was.

He was gazing at the singular prospect when a shot rang in the air. It seemed to come from a distance, and he interpreted it as a signal. But it was followed presently by another; and putting his hand to his hat to keep it from falling, he found that the upturned brim had been pierced by a bullet.

He stopped at this evident hint, and, taking his dispatch bag from his shoulder, placed it significantly upon a boulder, and looked around as if to await the appearance of the unseen marksman. The rifle shot rang out again, the bag quivered, and turned over with a bullet hole through it!

He took out his white handkerchief and waved it. Another shot followed, and the handkerchief was snapped from his fingers, torn from corner to corner. A feeling of desperation and fury seized him; he was being played with by a masked and skillful assassin, who only waited until it pleased him to fire the deadly shot! But this time he could see the rifle smoke drifting from under a sycamore not a hundred yards away. He set his white lips together, but with a determined face and unfaltering step walked directly towards it. In another moment he believed and almost hoped that all would be over. With such a marksman he would not be maimed, but killed outright.

He had not covered half the distance before a man lounged out from behind the tree carelessly shouldering his rifle. He was tall but slightly built, with an amused,

critical manner, and nothing about him to suggest the bloodthirsty assassin. He met Brice halfway, dropping his rifle slantingly across his breast with his hands lightly grasping the lock, and gazed at the young man curiously.

"You look as if you 'd had a big scare, old man, but you 've clear grit for all that!" he said, with a critical and reassuring smile. "Now, what are you doing here? Stay," he continued, as Brice's parched lips prevented him from replying immediately. "I ought to know your face. Hello! you 're the expressman!" His glance suddenly shifted, and swept past Brice over the ground beyond him to the entrance of the hollow, but his smile returned as he apparently satisfied himself that the young man was alone. "Well, what do you want?"

"I want to see Snapshot Harry," said Brice, with an effort. His voice came back more slowly than his color, but that was perhaps hurried by a sense of shame at his physical weakness.

"What you want is a drop o' whiskey," said the stranger good humoredly, taking his arm, "and we 'll find it in that shanty

just behind the tree." To Brice's surprise, a few steps in that direction revealed a fair-sized cabin, with a slight pretentiousness about it of neatness, comfort, and picturesque effect, far superior to the Tarbox shanty. A few flowers were in boxes on the window — signs, as Brice fancied, of feminine taste. When they reached the threshold, somewhat of this quality was also visible in the interior. When Brice had partaken of the whiskey, the stranger, who had kept silence, pointed to a chair, and said smilingly: —

"I am Henry Dimwood, alias Snapshot Harry, and this is my house."

"I came to speak with you about the robbery of greenbacks from the coach last night," began Brice hurriedly, with a sudden access of hope at his reception. "I mean, of course," — he stopped and hesitated, — "the actual robbery before *you* stopped us."

"What!" said Harry, springing to his feet, "do you mean to say *you* knew it?"

Brice's heart sank, but he remained steadfast and truthful. "Yes," he said, "I knew it when I handed down the box. I saw that

the lock had been forced, but I snapped it together again. It was my fault. Perhaps I should have warned you, but I am solely to blame."

"Did Yuba Bill know of it?" asked the highwayman, with singular excitement.

"Not at the time, I give you my word!" replied Brice quickly, thinking only of loyalty to his old comrade. "I never told him till we reached the station."

"And he knew it then?" repeated Harry eagerly.

"Yes."

"Did he say anything? Did he do anything? Did he look astonished?"

Brice remembered Bill's uncontrollable merriment, but replied vaguely and diplomatically, "He was certainly astonished."

A laugh gathered in Snapshot Harry's eyes which at last overspread his whole face, and finally shook his frame as he sat helplessly down again. Then, wiping his eyes, he said in a shaky voice: —

"It would have been sure death to have trusted myself near that station, but I think I 'd have risked it just to have seen Bill's face when you told him! Just think of it!

Bill, who was a match for anybody! Bill, who was never caught napping! Bill, who only wanted supreme control of things to wipe me off the face of the earth! Bill, who knew how everything was done, and could stop it if he chose, and then to have been *robbed twice in one evening by my gang!* Yes, sir! Yuba Bill and his rotten old coach were *gone through twice inside half an hour* by the gang!"

"Then you knew of it too?" said Brice, in uneasy astonishment.

"Afterwards, my young friend — like Yuba Bill — afterwards." He stopped; his whole expression changed. "It was done by two sneaking hounds," he said sharply; "one whom I suspected before, and one, a new hand, a pal of his. They were detached to watch the coach and be satisfied that the greenbacks were aboard, for it is n't my style to 'hold up' except for something special. They were to take seats on the coach as far as Ringwood Station, three miles below where we held you up, and to get out there and pass the word to us that it was all right. They did n't; that made us a little extra careful, seeing some-

thing was wrong, but never suspecting *them*. We found out afterwards that they got one of my scouts to cut down that tree, saying it was my orders and a part of our game, calculating in the stoppage and confusion to collar the swag and get off with it. Without knowing it, *you* played into their hands by going into Tarbox's cabin."

"But how did you know this?" interrupted Brice, in wonder.

"They forgot one thing," continued Snapshot Harry grimly. "They forgot that half an hour before and half an hour after a stage is stopped we have that road patrolled, every foot of it. While I was opening the box in the brush, the two fools, sneaking along the road, came slap upon one of my patrols, and then tried to run for it. One was dropped, but before he was plugged full of holes and hung up on a tree, he confessed, and said the other man who escaped had the greenbacks."

Brice's face fell. "Then they are lost," he said bitterly.

"Not unless he eats them — as he may want to do before I 'm done on him, for he must either starve or come out. That

road is still watched by my men from Tarbox's cabin to the bridge. He 's there somewhere, and can't get forward or backward. Look!" he said, rising and going to the door. "That road," he pointed to the stage road, — a narrow ledge flanked on one side by a precipitous mountain wall, and on the other by an equally precipitate descent, — "is his limit and tether, and he can't escape on either side."

"But the trail?"

"There is but one entrance to it, — the way you came, and that is guarded too. From the time you entered it until you reached the bottom, you were signaled here from point to point! *He* would have been dropped! I merely gave *you* a hint of what might have happened to you, if you were up to any little game! You took it like a white man. Come, now! What is your business?"

Thus challenged, Brice plunged with youthful hopefulness into his plan; if, as he voiced it, it seemed to him a little extravagant, he was buoyed up by the frankness of the highwayman, who also had treated the double robbery with a levity that seemed

almost as extravagant. He suggested that they should work together to recover the money; that the express company should know that the unprecedented stealthy introduction of robbers in the guise of passengers was not Snapshot Harry's method, and he repudiated it as unmanly and unsportsmanlike; and that, by using his superior skill and knowledge of the locality to recover the money and deliver the culprit into the company's hands, he would not only earn the reward that they should offer, but that he would evoke a sentiment that all Californians would understand and respect. The highwayman listened with a tolerant smile, but, to Brice's surprise, this appeal to his vanity touched him less than the prospective punishment of the thief.

"It would serve the d—d hound right," he muttered, "if, instead of being shot like a man, he was made to 'do time' in prison, like the ordinary sneak thief that he is." When Brice had concluded, he said briefly, "The only trouble with your plans, my young friend, is that about twenty-five men have got to consider them, and have *their* say about it. Every man in my gang is a

shareholder in these greenbacks, for I work on the square; and it 's for him to say whether he 'll give them up for a reward and the good opinion of the express company. Perhaps," he went on, with a peculiar smile, "it 's just as well that you tried it on me first! However, I 'll sound the boys, and see what comes of it, but not until you 're safe off the premises."

"And you 'll let me assist you?" said Brice eagerly.

Snapshot Harry smiled again. "Well, if you come across the d—d thief, and you recognize him and can get the greenbacks from him, I 'll pass over the game to you." He rose and added, apparently by way of farewell, "Perhaps it 's just as well that I should give you a guide part of the way to prevent accidents." He went to a door leading to an adjoining room, and called "Flo!"

Brice's heart leaped! If he had forgotten her in the excitement of his interview, he atoned for it by a vivid blush. Her own color was a little heightened as she slipped into the room, but the two managed to look demurely at each other, without a word of recognition.

"This is my niece, Flora," said Snapshot Harry, with a slight wave of the hand that was by no means uncourtly, "and her company will keep you from any impertinent questioning as well as if I were with you. This is Mr. Brice, Flo, who came to see me on business, and has quite forgotten my practical joking."

The girl acknowledged Brice's bow with a shyness very different from her manner of the evening before. Brice felt embarrassed and evidently showed it, for his host, with a smile, put an end to the constraint by shaking the young man's hand heartily, bidding him good-by, and accompanying him to the door.

Once on their way, Mr. Brice's spirits returned. "I told you last night," he said, "that I hoped to meet you the next time with a better introduction. You suggested your uncle's. Well, are you satisfied?"

"But you did n't come to see *me*," said the girl mischievously.

"How do you know what my intentions were?" returned the young man gayly, gazing at the girl's charming face with a serious doubt as to the singleness of his own intentions.

"Oh, because I know," she answered, with a toss of her brown head. "I heard what you said to uncle Harry."

Mr. Brice's brow contracted. "Perhaps you saw me, too, when I came," he said, with a slight touch of bitterness as he thought of his reception.

Miss Flo laughed. Brice walked on silently; the girl was heartless and worthy of her education. After a pause she said demurely, "*I* knew he would n't hurt you — but *you* did n't. That 's where you showed your grit in walking straight on."

"And I suppose you were greatly amused," he replied scornfully.

The girl lifted her arms a little wearily, as with a half sigh she readjusted her brown braids under her uncle's gray slouch hat, which she had caught up as she passed out. "Thar ain't much to laugh at here!" she said. "But it was mighty funny when you tried to put your hat straight, and then found thar was that bullet hole right through the brim! And the way you stared at it — Lordy!"

Her musical laugh was infectious, and swept away his outraged dignity. He laughed

too. At last she said, gazing at his hat, "It won't do for you to go back to your folks wearin' that sort o' thing. Here! Take mine!" With a saucy movement she audaciously lifted his hat from his head, and placed her own upon it.

"But this is your uncle's hat," he remonstrated.

"All the same; he spoiled yours," she laughed, adjusting his hat upon her own head. "But I 'll keep yours to remember you by. I 'll loop it up by this hole, and it 'll look mighty purty. Jes' see!" She plucked a wild rose from a bush by the wayside, and, passing the stalk through the bullet hole, pinned the brim against the crown by a thorn. "There," she said, putting on the hat again with a little affectation of coquetry, "how 's that?"

Mr. Brice thought it very picturesque and becoming to the graceful head and laughing eyes beneath it, and said so. Then, becoming in his turn audacious, he drew nearer to her side.

"I suppose you know the forfeit of putting on a gentleman's hat?"

Apparently she did, for she suddenly made

a warning gesture, and said, "Not here! It would be a bigger forfeit than you 'd keer fo'." Before he could reply she turned aside as if quite innocently, and passed into the shade of a fringe of buckeyes. He followed quickly. "I did n't mean that," she said; but in the mean time he had kissed the pink tip of her ear under its brown coils. He was, nevertheless, somewhat discomfited by her undisturbed manner and serene face. "Ye don't seem to mind bein' shot at," she said, with an odd smile, "but it won't do for you to kalkilate that *everybody* shoots as keerfully as uncle Harry."

"I don't understand," he replied, struck by her manner.

"Ye ain't very complimentary, or you 'd allow that other folks might be wantin' what you took just now, and might consider you was poachin'," she returned gravely. "My best and strongest holt among those men is that uncle Harry would kill the first one who tried anything like that on — and they know it. That 's how I get all the liberty I want here, and can come and go alone as I like."

Brice's face flushed quickly with genuine

shame and remorse. "Do forgive me," he said hurriedly. "I did n't think — I 'm a brute and a fool!"

"Uncle Harry allowed you was either drunk or a born idiot when you was promenadin' into the valley just now," she said, with a smile.

"And what did you think?" he asked a little uneasily.

"I thought you did n't look like a drinkin' man," she answered audaciously.

Brice bit his lip and walked on silently, at which she cast a sidelong glance under her widely spaced heavy lashes and said demurely, "I thought last night it was mighty good for you to stand up for your frien' Yuba Bill, and then, after ye knew who *I* was, to let the folks see you kinder cottoned to me too. Not in the style o' that land-grabber Heckshill, nor that peart newspaper man, neither. Of course I gave them as good as they sent," she went on, with a little laugh, but Brice could see that her sensitive lip in profile had the tremulous and resentful curve of one who was accustomed to slight and annoyance. Was it possible that this reckless, self-contained girl felt her position keenly?

"I am proud to have your good opinion," he said, with a certain respect mingled with his admiring glance, "even if I have not your uncle's."

"Oh, he likes you well enough, or he would n't have hearkened to you a minute," she said quickly. "When you opened out about them greenbacks, I jes' clutched my cheer *so*," — she illustrated her words with a gesture of her hands, and her face actually seemed to grow pale at the recollection, — "and I nigh started up to stop ye; but that idea of Yuba Bill bein' robbed *twice* I think tickled him awful. But it was lucky none o' the gang heard ye or suspected anything. I reckon that 's why he sent me with you, — to keep them from doggin' you and askin' questions that a straight man like you would be sure to answer. But they dare n't come nigh ye as long as I 'm with you!" She threw back her head and rose-crested hat with a mock air of protection that, however, had a certain real pride in it.

"I am very glad of that, if it gives me the chance of having your company alone," returned Brice, smiling, "and very grateful to your uncle, whatever were his reasons for

making you my guide. But you have already been that to me," and he told her of the footprints. "But for you," he added, with gentle significance, "I should not have been here."

She was silent for a moment, and he could only see the back of her head and its heavy brown coils. After a pause she asked abruptly, "Where 's your handkerchief?"

He took it from his pocket; her ingenious uncle's bullet had torn rather than pierced the cambric.

"I thought so," she said, gravely examining it, "but I kin mend it as good as new. I reckon you allow I can't sew," she continued, "but I do heaps of mendin', as the digger squaw and Chinamen we have here do only the coarser work. I 'll send it back to you, and meanwhiles you keep mine."

She drew a handkerchief from her pocket and handed it to him. To his great surprise it was a delicate one, beautifully embroidered, and utterly incongruous to her station. The idea that flashed upon him, it is to be feared, showed itself momentarily in his hesitation and embarrassment.

She gave a quick laugh. "Don't be

frightened. It 's bought and paid for. Uncle Harry don't touch passengers' fixin's; that ain't his style. You oughter know that." Yet in spite of her laugh, he could see the sensitive pout of her lower lip.

"I was only thinking," he said hurriedly and sympathetically, "that it was too fine for me. But I will be proud to keep it as a souvenir of you. It 's not too pretty for *that!*"

"Uncle gets me these things. He don't keer what they cost," she went on, ignoring the compliment. "Why, I 've got awfully fine gowns up there that I only wear when I go to Marysville oncet in a while."

"Does he take you there?" asked Brice.

"No!" she answered quietly. "Not" — a little defiantly — "that he 's afeard, for they can't prove anything against him; no man kin swear to him, and thar ain't an officer that keers to go for him. But he 's that shy for *me* he don't keer to have me mixed with him."

"But nobody recognizes you?"

"Sometimes — but I don't keer for that." She cocked her hat a little audaciously, but Brice noticed that her arms afterwards

dropped at her side with the same weary gesture he had observed before. "Whenever I go into shops it 's always 'Yes, miss,' and 'No, miss,' and 'Certainly, Miss Dimwood.' Oh, they 're mighty respectful. I reckon they allow that Snapshot Harry's rifle carries far."

Presently she faced him again, for their conversation had been carried on in profile. There was a critical, searching look in her brown eyes.

"Here I 'm talkin' to you as if you were one" — Mr. Brice was positive she was going to say "one of the gang," but she hesitated and concluded, "one of my relations — like cousin Hiram."

"I wish you would think of me as being as true a friend," said the young man earnestly.

She did not reply immediately, but seemed to be examining the distance. They were not far from the cañon now, and the river bank. A fringe of buckeyes hid the base of the mountain, which had begun to tower up above them to the invisible stage road overhead. "I am going to be a real guide to you now," she said suddenly. "When

we reach that buckeye corner and are out of sight, we will turn into it instead of going through the cañon. You shall go up the mountain to the stage road, from *this* side."

"But it is impossible!" he exclaimed, in astonishment. "Your uncle said so."

"Coming *down*, but not going up," she returned, with a laugh. "I found it, and no one knows it but myself."

He glanced up at the towering cliff; its nearly perpendicular flanks were seamed with fissures, some clefts deeply set with stunted growths of thorn and "scrub," but still sheer and forbidding, and then glanced back at her incredulously. "I will show you," she said, answering his look with a smile of triumph. "I have n't tramped over this whole valley for nothing! But wait until we reach the river bank. They must think that we 've gone through the cañon."

"They?"

"Yes — any one who is watching us," said the girl dryly.

A few steps further on brought them to the buckeye thicket, which extended to the river bank and mouth of the cañon. The girl lingered for a moment ostentatiously be-

fore it, and then, saying "Come," suddenly turned at right angles into the thicket. Brice followed, and the next moment they were hidden by its friendly screen from the valley. On the other side rose the mountain wall, leaving a narrow trail before them. It was composed of the rocky débris and fallen trees of the cliff, from which buckeyes and larches were now springing. It was uneven, irregular, and slowly ascending; but the young girl led the way with the free footstep of a mountaineer, and yet a grace that was akin to delicacy. Nor could he fail to notice that, after the Western girl's fashion, she was shod more elegantly and lightly than was consistent with the rude and rustic surroundings. It was the same slim shoe-print which had guided him that morning. Presently she stopped, and seemed to be gazing curiously at the cliff side. Brice followed the direction of her eyes. On a protruding bush at the edge of one of the wooded clefts of the mountain flank something was hanging, and in the freshening southerly wind was flapping heavily, like a raven's wing, or as if still saturated with the last night's rain. "That 's mighty queer!" said Flo, gazing

intently at the unsightly and incongruous attachment to the shrub, which had a vague, weird suggestion. "It was n't there yesterday."

"It looks like a man's coat," remarked Brice uneasily.

"Whew!" said the girl. "Then somebody has come down who won't go up again! There 's a lot of fresh rocks and brush here, too. What 's that?" She was pointing to a spot some yards before them where there had been a recent precipitation of débris and uprooted shrubs. But mingled with it lay a mass of rags strangely akin to the tattered remnant that flagged from the bush a hundred feet above them. The girl suddenly uttered a sharp feminine cry of mingled horror and disgust, — the first weakness of sex she had shown, — and, recoiling, grasped Brice's arm. "Don't go there! Come away!"

But Brice had already seen that which, while it shocked him, was urging him forward with an invincible fascination. Gently releasing himself, and bidding the girl stand back, he moved toward the unsightly heap. Gradually it disclosed a grotesque carica-

ture of a human figure, but so maimed and doubled up that it seemed a stuffed and fallen scarecrow. As is common in men stricken suddenly down by accident in the fullness of life, the clothes asserted themselves before all else with a hideous ludicrousness, obliterating even the majesty of death in their helpless yet ironical incongruity. The garments seemed to have never fitted the wearer, but to have been assumed in ghastly jocularity, — a boot half off the swollen foot, a ripped waistcoat thrown over the shoulder, were like the properties of some low comedian. At first the body appeared to be headless ; but as Brice cleared away the débris and lifted it, he saw with horror that the head was twisted under the shoulder, and swung helplessly from the dislocated neck. But that horror gave way to a more intense and thrilling emotion as he saw the face — although strangely free from laceration or disfigurement, and impurpled and distended into the simulation of a self-complacent smile — was a face he recognized! It was the face of the cynical traveler in the coach — the man who he was now satisfied had robbed it.

A strange and selfish resentment took possession of him. Here was the man through whom he had suffered shame and peril, and who even now seemed complacently victorious in death. He examined him closely; his coat and waistcoat had been partly torn away in his fall; his shirt still clung to him, but through its torn front could be seen a heavy treasure belt encircling his waist. Forgetting his disgust, Brice tore away the shirt and unloosed the belt. It was saturated with water like the rest of the clothing, but its pocket seemed heavy and distended. In another instant he had opened it, and discovered the envelope containing the packet of greenbacks, its seal still inviolate and unbroken. It was the stolen treasure!

A faint sigh recalled him to himself. The girl was standing a few feet from him, regarding him curiously.

"It 's the thief himself!" he said, in a breathless explanation. "In trying to escape he must have fallen from the road above. But here are the greenbacks safe! We must go back to your uncle at once," he said excitedly. "Come!"

"Are you mad?" she cried, in astonishment.

"No," returned Brice, in equal astonishment, "but you know I agreed with him that we should work together to recover the money, and I must show him our good luck."

"He told you that if you met the thief and could get the money from him, you were welcome to it," said the girl gravely, "and you *have* got it."

"But not in the way he meant," returned Brice hurriedly. "This man's death is the result of his attempting to escape from your uncle's guards along the road; the merit of it belongs to them and your uncle. It would be cowardly and mean of me to take advantage of it."

The girl looked at him with an expression of mingled admiration and pity. "But the guards were placed there before he ever saw you," said she impatiently. "And whatever uncle Harry may want to do, he must do what the gang says. And with the money once in their possession, or even in yours, if they knew it, I would n't give much for its chances — or *yours* either — for gettin' out o' this hollow again."

"But if *they* are treacherous, that is no reason why I should be so," protested Brice stoutly.

"You 've no right to say they were treacherous when they knew nothing of your plans," said the girl sharply. "Your company would have more call to say *you* were treacherous to it for making a plan without consultin' them." Brice winced, for he had never thought of that before. "You can offer that reward *after* you get away from here with the greenbacks. But," she added proudly, with a toss of her head, "go back if you want to! Tell him all! Tell him where you found it — tell him I did not take you through the cañon, but was showin' you a new trail I had never shown to *them!* Tell him that I am a traitor, for I have given them and him away to you, a stranger, and that you consider yourself the only straight and honest one about here!"

Brice flushed with shame. "Forgive me," he said hurriedly; "you are right and I am wrong again. I will do just what you say. I will first place these greenbacks in a secure place — and then" —

"Get away first — that 's your only holt,"

she interrupted him quickly, her eyes still flashing through indignant tears. "Come quick, for I must put you on the trail before they miss me."

She darted forward; he followed, but she kept the lead, as much, he fancied, to evade his observation as to expedite his going. Presently they stopped before the sloping trunk of a huge pine that had long since fallen from the height above, but, although splintered where it had broken ground, had preserved some fifty feet of its straight trunk erect and leaning like a ladder against the mountain wall. "There," she said, hurriedly pointing to its decaying but still projecting lateral branches, "you climb it — I have. At the top you 'll find it 's stuck in a cleft among the brush. There 's a little hollow and an old waterway from a spring above which makes a trail through the brush. It 's as good as the trail you took from the stage road this mornin', but it 's not as safe comin' down. Keep along it to the spring, and it will land ye jest the other side of uncle Hiram's cabin. Go quick! I 'll wait here until ye 've reached the cleft."

"But you," he said, turning toward her, "how can I ever thank you?"

As if anticipating a leave-taking, the girl had already withdrawn herself a few yards away, and simply made an upward gesture with her hand. "Quick! Up with you! Every minute now is a risk to me."

Thus appealed to, Brice could only comply. Perhaps he was a little hurt at the girl's evident desire to avoid a gentler parting. Securing his prized envelope within his breast, he began to ascend the tree. Its inclination, and the aid offered by the broken stumps of branches, made this comparatively easy, and in a few moments he reached its top, and stood upon a little ledge in the wall. A swift glance around him revealed the whole waterway or fissure slanting upward along the mountain face. Then he turned quickly to look down the dizzy height. At first he could distinguish nothing but the top of the buckeyes and their white clustering blossoms. Then something fluttered, — the torn white handkerchief of his that she had kept. And then he caught a single glimpse of the flower-plumed hat receding rapidly among the trees, and Flora Dimwood was gone.

III

In twenty-four hours Edward Brice was in San Francisco. But although successful and the bearer of the treasure, it is doubtful if he approached this end of his journey with the temerity he had shown on entering the robbers' valley. A consciousness that the methods he had employed might excite the ridicule, if not the censure, of his principals, or that he might have compromised them in his meeting with Snapshot Harry, considerably modified his youthful exultation. It is possible that Flora's reproach, which still rankled in his mind, may have quickened his sensitiveness on that point. However, he had resolved to tell the whole truth, except his episode with Flora, and to place the conduct of Snapshot Harry and the Tarboxes in as favorable a light as possible. But first he had recourse to the manager, a man of shrewd worldly experience, who had recommended him to his place. When he had finished and handed him the treasured envelope, the man looked at him with a critical and yet not unkindly expression. "Perhaps it 's just as well, Brice,

that you did come to me at first, and did not make your report to the president and directors."

"I suppose," said Brice diffidently, "that they would n't have liked my communicating with the highwayman without their knowledge?"

"More than that — they would n't have believed your story."

"Not believe it?" cried Brice, flushing quickly. "Do you think" —

The manager checked him with a laugh. "Hold on! I believe every word of it, and why? Because you 've added nothing to it to make yourself the regular hero. Why, with your opportunity, and no one able to contradict you, you might have told me you had a hand-to-hand fight with the thief, and had to kill him to recover the money, and even brought your handkerchief and hat back with the bullet holes to prove it." Brice winked as he thought of the fair possessor of those articles. "But as a story for general circulation, it won't do. Have you told it to any one else? Does any one know what happened but yourself?"

Brice thought of Flora, but he had re-

solved not to compromise her, and he had a consciousness that she would be equally loyal to him. "No one," he answered boldly.

"Very good. And I suppose you would n't mind if it were kept out of the newspapers? You 're not hankering after a reputation as a hero?"

"Certainly not," said Brice indignantly.

"Well, then, we 'll keep it where it is. You will say nothing. I will hand over the greenbacks to the company, but only as much of your story as I think they 'll stand. You 're all right as it is. Yuba Bill has already set you up in his report to the company, and the recovery of this money will put you higher! Only, the *public* need know nothing about it."

"But," asked Brice amazedly, "how can it be prevented? The shippers who lost the money will have to know that it has been recovered."

"Why should they? The company will assume the risk, and repay them just the same. It 's a great deal better to have the reputation for accepting the responsibility than for the shippers to think that they

only get their money through the accident of its recovery."

Brice gasped at this large business truth. Besides, it occurred to him that it kept the secret, and Flora's participation in it, from Snapshot Harry and the gang. He had not thought of that before.

"Come," continued the manager, with official curtness. "What do you say? Are you willing to leave it to me?"

Brice hesitated a moment. It was not what his impulsive truthful nature had suggested. It was not what his youthful fancy had imagined. He had not worked upon the sympathies of the company on behalf of Snapshot Harry as he believed he would do. He had not even impressed the manager. His story, far from exciting a chivalrous sentiment, had been pronounced improbable. Yet he reflected he had so far protected *her*, and he consented with a sigh.

Nevertheless, the result ought to have satisfied him. A dazzling check, inclosed in a letter of thanks from the company the next day, and his promotion from "the road" to the San Francisco office, would have been quite enough for any one but Edward Brice.

Yet he was grateful, albeit a little frightened and remorseful over his luck. He could not help thinking of the kindly tolerance of the highwayman, the miserable death of the actual thief, which had proved his own salvation, and above all the generous, high-spirited girl who had aided his escape. While on his way to San Francisco, and yet in the first glow of his success, he had written her a few lines from Marysville, inclosed in a letter to Mr. Tarbox. He had received no reply.

Then a week passed. He wrote again, and still no reply. Then a vague feeling of jealousy took possession of him as he remembered her warning hint of the attentions to which she was subjected, and he became singularly appreciative of Snapshot Harry's proficiency as a marksman. Then, cruelest of all, for your impassioned lover is no lover at all if not cruel in his imaginings, he remembered how she had evaded her uncle's espionage with *him;* could she not equally with *another?* Perhaps that was why she had hurried him away, — why she had prevented his returning to her uncle. Following this came another week of disappointment

and equally miserable cynical philosophy, in which he persuaded himself he was perfectly satisfied with his material advancement, that it was the only outcome of his adventure to be recognized; and he was more miserable than ever.

A month had passed, when one morning he received a small package by post. The address was in a handwriting unknown to him, but opening the parcel he was surprised to find only a handkerchief neatly folded. Examining it closely, he found it was his own, — the one he had given her, the rent made by her uncle's bullet so ingeniously and delicately mended as to almost simulate embroidery. The joy that suddenly filled him at this proof of her remembrance showed him too plainly how hollow had been his cynicism and how lasting his hope! Turning over the wrapper eagerly, he discovered what he had at first thought was some business card. It was, indeed, printed and not engraved, in some common newspaper type, and bore the address, "Hiram Tarbox, Land and Timber Agent, 1101 California Street." He again examined the parcel; there was nothing else, — not a line

from *her!* But it was a clue at last, and she had not forgotten him! He seized his hat, and ten minutes later was breasting the steep sand hill into which California Street in those days plunged, and again emerged at its crest, with a few struggling houses.

But when he reached the summit he could see that the outline of the street was still plainly marked along the distance by cottages and new suburban villa-like blocks of houses. No. 1101 was in one of these blocks, a small tenement enough, but a palace compared to Mr. Tarbox's Sierran cabin. He impetuously rang the bell, and without waiting to be announced dashed into the little drawing-room and Mr. Tarbox's presence. That had changed too; Mr. Tarbox was arrayed in a suit of clothes as new, as cheaply decorative, as fresh and, apparently, as damp as his own drawing-room.

"Did you get my letter? Did you give her the one I inclosed? Why did n't you answer?" burst out Brice, after his first breathless greeting.

Mr. Tarbox's face here changed so suddenly into his old dejected doggedness that

Brice could have imagined himself back in the Sierran cabin. The man straightened and bowed himself at Brice's questions, and then replied with bold, deliberate emphasis:

"Yes, I *did* get your letter. I *did n't* give no letter o' yours to her. And I did n't answer your letter *before*, for I did n't propose to answer it *at all*."

"Why?" demanded Brice indignantly.

"I did n't give her your letter because I did n't kalkilate to be any go-between 'twixt you and Snapshot Harry's niece. Look yar, Mr. Brice. Sense I read that 'ar paragraph in that paper you gave me, I allowed to myself that it was n't the square thing for me to have any more doin's with him, and I quit it. I jest chucked your letter in the fire. I did n't answer you because I reckoned I 'd no call to correspond with ye, and when I showed ye that trail over to Harry's camp, it was ended. I 've got a house and business to look arter, and it don't jibe with keepin' company with 'road agents.' That 's what I got outer that paper you gave me, Mr. Brice."

Rage and disgust filled Brice at the man's utter selfishness and shameless desertion of

his kindred, none the less powerfully that he remembered the part he himself had played in concocting the paragraph. "Do you mean to say," he demanded passionately, "that for the sake of that foolish paragraph you gave up your own kindred? That you truckled to the mean prejudices of your neighbors and kept that poor, defenseless girl from the only honest roof she could find refuge under? That you dared to destroy my letter to her, and made her believe I was as selfish and ungrateful as yourself?"

"Young feller," said Mr. Tarbox still more deliberately, yet with a certain dignity that Brice had never noticed before, "what 's between you and Flo, and what rights she has fer thinkin' ye 'ez selfish' and 'ez ongrateful' ez me — ef she does, I dunno! — but when ye talk o' me givin' up my kindred, and sling such hogwash ez 'ongrateful' and 'selfish' round this yer sittin'-room, mebbe it mout occur to ye that Harry Dimwood might hev *his* opinion o' what was 'ongrateful' and 'selfish' ef I 'd played in between his niece and a young man o' the express company, his nat'ral enemy. It 's one thing to hev helped ye to see her in her

uncle's own camp, but another to help ye by makin' a clandecent post-offis o' my cabin. Ef, instead o' writin', you 'd hev posted yourself by comin' to me, you mout hev found out that when I broke with Harry I offered to take Flo with me for good and all — ef he 'd keep away from us. And that 's the kind o' 'honest roof' that that thar 'poor defenseless girl' got under when her crippled mother died three weeks ago, and left Harry free. It was by 'trucklin'' to them 'mean prejudices,' and readin' that thar 'foolish paragraph,' that I settled this thing then and thar!"

Brice's revulsion of sentiment was so complete, and the gratitude that beamed in his eyes was so sincere, that Mr. Tarbox hardly needed the profuse apologies which broke from him. "Forgive me!" he continued to stammer, "I have wronged you, wronged *her* — everybody. But as you know, Mr. Tarbox, how I have felt over this, how deeply — how passionately" —

"It *does* make a man loony sometimes," said Mr. Tarbox, relaxing into demure dryness again, "so I reckon you *did!* Mebbe she reckoned so, too, for she asked me to

give you the handkercher I sent ye. It looked as if she 'd bin doin' some fancy work on it."

Brice glanced quickly at Mr. Tarbox's face. It was stolid and imperturbable. She had evidently kept the secret of what passed in the hollow to herself. For the first time he looked around the room curiously. "I did n't know you were a land agent before," he said.

"No more I was! All that kem out o' that paragraph, Mr. Brice. That man Heckshill, who was so mighty perlite that night, wrote to me afterwards that he did n't know my name till he 'd seed that paragraph, and he wanted to know ef, ez a 'well-known citizen,' I could recommend him some timber lands. I recommended him half o' my own quarter section, and he took it. He 's puttin' up a mill thar, and that 's another reason why we want peace and quietness up thar. I 'm tryin' (betwixt and between us, Mr. Brice) to get Harry to cl'ar out and sell his rights in the valley and the water power on the Fork to Heckshill and me. I 'm opening a business here."

"Then you 've left Mrs. Tarbox with

Miss Flora in your cabin while you attend to business here," said Brice tentatively.

"Not exactly, Mr. Brice. The old woman thought it a good chance to come to 'Frisco and put Flo in one o' them Catholic convent schools — that asks no questions whar the raw logs come from, and turns 'em out first-class plank all round. You foller me, Mr. Brice? But Mrs. Tarbox is jest in the next room, and would admire to tell ye all this — and I 'll go in and send her to you." And with a patronizing wave of the hand, Mr. Tarbox complacently disappeared in the hall.

Mr. Brice was not sorry to be left to himself in his utter bewilderment! Flo, separated from her detrimental uncle, and placed in a convent school! Tarbox, the obscure pioneer, a shrewd speculator emerging into success, and taking the uncle's place! And all this within that month which he had wasted with absurd repinings. How feeble seemed his own adventure and advancement; how even ludicrous his pretensions to any patronage and superiority. How this common backwoodsman had set him in his place as easily as *she* had evaded the advances of

the journalist and Heckshill! They had taught him a lesson; perhaps even the sending back of his handkerchief was part of it! His heart grew heavy; he walked to the window and gazed out with a long sigh.

A light laugh, that might have been an echo of the one which had attracted him that night in Tarbox's cabin, fell upon his ear. He turned quickly to meet Flora Dimwood's laughing eyes shining upon him as she stood in the doorway.

Many a time during that month he had thought of this meeting — had imagined what it would be like — what would be his manner towards her — what would be her greeting, and what they would say. He would be cold, gentle, formal, gallant, gay, sad, trustful, reproachful, even as the moods in which he thought of her came to his foolish brain. He would always begin with respectful seriousness, or a frankness equal to her own, but never, never again would he offend as he had offended under the buckeyes! And now, with her pretty face shining upon him, all his plans, his speeches, his preparations vanished, and left

him dumb. Yet he moved towards her with a brief articulate something on his lips, — something between a laugh and a sigh, — but that really was a kiss, and — in point of fact — promptly folded her in his arms.

Yet it was certainly direct, and perhaps the best that could be done, for the young lady did not emerge from it as coolly, as unemotionally, nor possibly as quickly as she had under the shade of the buckeyes. But she persuaded him — by still holding his hand — to sit beside her on the chilly, highly varnished "green rep" sofa, albeit to him it was a bank in a bower of enchantment. Then she said, with adorable reproachfulness, "You don't ask what I did with the body."

Mr. Edward Brice started. He was young, and unfamiliar with the evasive expansiveness of the female mind at such supreme moments.

"The body — oh, yes — certainly."

"I buried it myself — it was suthin too awful! — and the gang would have been sure to have found it, and the empty belt. I burned *that*. So that nobody knows nothin'."

It was not a time for strictly grammatical negatives, and I am afraid that the girl's characteristically familiar speech, even when pathetically corrected here and there by the influence of the convent, endeared her the more to him. And when she said, "And now, Mr. Edward Brice, sit over at that end of the sofy and let 's talk," they talked. They talked for an hour, more or less continuously, until they were surprised by a discreet cough and the entrance of Mrs. Tarbox. Then there was more talk, and the discovery that Mr. Brice was long due at the office.

"Ye might drop in, now and then, whenever ye feel like it, and Flo is at home," suggested Mrs. Tarbox at parting.

Mr. Brice *did* drop in frequently during the next month. On one of these occasions Mr. Tarbox accompanied him to the door. "And now — ez everything is settled and in order, Mr. Brice, and ef you should be wantin' to say anything about it to your bosses at the office, ye may mention *my* name ez Flo Dimwood's second cousin, and say I 'm a depositor in their bank. And," with greater deliberation, "ef anything at

any time should be thrown up at ye for marryin' a niece o' Snapshot Harry's, ye might mention, keerless like, that Snapshot Harry, under the name o' Henry J. Dimwood, has held shares in their old bank for years!"

A TREASURE OF THE REDWOODS

PART I

Mr. Jack Fleming stopped suddenly before a lifeless and decaying redwood-tree with an expression of disgust and impatience. It was the very tree he had passed only an hour before, and he now knew he had been describing that mysterious and hopeless circle familiar enough to those lost in the woods.

There was no mistaking the tree, with its one broken branch which depended at an angle like the arm of a semaphore; nor did it relieve his mind to reflect that his mishap was partly due to his own foolish abstraction. He was returning to camp from a neighboring mining town, and while indulging in the usual day-dreams of a youthful prospector, had deviated from his path in attempting to make a short cut through the forest. He had lost the sun, his only guide,

in the thickly interlaced boughs above him, which suffused through the long columnar vault only a vague, melancholy twilight. He had evidently penetrated some unknown seclusion, absolutely primeval and untrodden. The thick layers of decaying bark and the desiccated dust of ages deadened his footfall and invested the gloom with a profound silence.

As he stood for a moment or two, irresolute, his ear, by this time attuned to the stillness, caught the faint but distinct lap and trickle of water. He was hot and thirsty, and turned instinctively in that direction. A very few paces brought him to a fallen tree; at the foot of its upturned roots gurgled the spring whose upwelling stream had slowly but persistently loosened their hold on the soil, and worked their ruin. A pool of cool and clear water, formed by the disruption of the soil, overflowed, and after a few yards sank again in the sodden floor.

As he drank and bathed his head and hands in this sylvan basin, he noticed the white glitter of a quartz ledge in its depths, and was considerably surprised and relieved to find, hard by, an actual outcrop of that

rock through the thick carpet of bark and dust. This betokened that he was near the edge of the forest or some rocky opening. He fancied that the light grew clearer beyond, and the presence of a few fronds of ferns confirmed him in the belief that he was approaching a different belt of vegetation. Presently he saw the vertical beams of the sun again piercing the opening in the distance. With this prospect of speedy deliverance from the forest at last secure, he did not hurry forward, but on the contrary coolly retraced his footsteps to the spring again. The fact was that the instincts and hopes of the prospector were strongly dominant in him, and having noticed the quartz ledge and the contiguous outcrop, he determined to examine them more closely. He had still time to find his way home, and it might not be so easy to penetrate the wilderness again. Unfortunately, he had neither pick, pan, nor shovel with him, but a very cursory displacement of the soil around the spring and at the outcrop with his hands showed him the usual red soil and decomposed quartz which constituted an "indication." Yet none knew better than himself

how disappointing and illusive its results often were, and he regretted that he had not a pan to enable him to test the soil by washing it at the spring. If there were only a miner's cabin handy, he could easily borrow what he wanted. It was just the usual luck, — "the things a man sees when he has n't his gun with him!"

He turned impatiently away again in the direction of the opening. When he reached it, he found himself on a rocky hillside sloping toward a small green valley. A light smoke curled above a clump of willows; it was from the chimney of a low dwelling, but a second glance told him that it was no miner's cabin. There was a larger clearing around the house, and some rude attempt at cultivation in a roughly fenced area. Nevertheless, he determined to try his luck in borrowing a pick and pan there; at the worst he could inquire his way to the main road again.

A hurried scramble down the hill brought him to the dwelling, — a rambling addition of sheds to the usual log cabin. But he was surprised to find that its exterior, and indeed the palings of the fence around it, were

covered with the stretched and drying skins of animals. The pelts of bear, panther, wolf, and fox were intermingled with squirrel and wildcat skins, and the displayed wings of eagle, hawk, and kingfisher. There was no trail leading to or from the cabin; it seemed to have been lost in this opening of the encompassing woods and left alone and solitary.

The barking of a couple of tethered hounds at last brought a figure to the door of the nearest lean-to shed. It seemed to be that of a young girl, but it was clad in garments so ridiculously large and disproportionate that it was difficult to tell her precise age. A calico dress was pinned up at the skirt, and tightly girt at the waist by an apron — so long that one corner had to be tucked in at the apron string diagonally, to keep the wearer from treading on it. An enormous sunbonnet of yellow nankeen completely concealed her head and face, but allowed two knotted and twisted brown tails of hair to escape under its frilled cape behind. She was evidently engaged in some culinary work, and still held a large tin basin or pan she had been cleaning clasped to her breast.

Fleming's eye glanced at it covetously, ignoring the figure behind it. But he was diplomatic.

"I have lost my way in the woods. Can you tell me in what direction the main road lies?"

She pointed a small red hand apparently in the direction he had come. "Straight over thar — across the hill."

Fleming sighed. He had been making a circuit of the forest instead of going through it — and this open space containing the cabin was on a remote outskirt!

"How far is it to the road?" he asked.

"Jest a spell arter ye rise the hill, ef ye keep 'longside the woods. But it 's a right smart chance beyond, ef ye go through it."

This was quite plain to him. In the local dialect a "spell" was under a mile; "a right smart chance" might be three or four miles farther. Luckily the spring and outcrop were near the outskirts; he would pass near them again on his way. He looked longingly at the pan which she still held in her hands. "Would you mind lending me that pan for a little while?" he said half laughingly.

"Wot for?" demanded the girl quickly. Yet her tone was one of childish curiosity rather than suspicion. Fleming would have liked to avoid the question and the consequent exposure of his discovery which a direct answer implied. But he saw it was too late now.

"I want to wash a little dirt," he said bluntly.

The girl turned her deep sunbonnet toward him. Somewhere in its depths he saw the flash of white teeth. "Go along with ye — ye 're funnin'!" she said.

"I want to wash out some dirt in that pan — I 'm prospecting for gold," he said; "don't you understand?"

"Are ye a miner?"

"Well, yes — a sort of one," he returned, with a laugh.

"Then ye 'd better be scootin' out o' this mighty quick afore dad comes. He don't cotton to miners, and won't have 'em around. That 's why he lives out here."

"Well, I don't live out here," responded the young man lightly. "I should n't be here if I had n't lost my way, and in half an hour I 'll be off again. So I 'm not likely

to bother him. But," he added, as the girl still hesitated, "I 'll leave a deposit for the pan, if you like."

"Leave a which?"

"The money that the pan 's worth," said Fleming impatiently.

The huge sunbonnet stiffly swung around like the wind-sail of a ship and stared at the horizon. "I don't want no money. Ye kin git," said the voice in its depths.

"Look here," he said desperately, "I only wanted to prove to you that I 'll bring your pan back safe. Now look! If you don't like to take money, I 'll leave this ring with you until I come back. There!" He slipped a small specimen ring, made out of his first gold findings, from his little finger.

The sunbonnet slowly swung around again and stared at the ring. Then the little red right hand reached forward, took the ring, placed it on the forefinger of the left hand, with all the other fingers widely extended for the sunbonnet to view, and all the while the pan was still held against her side by the other hand. Fleming noticed that the hands, though tawny and not over clean,

were almost childlike in size, and that the forefinger was much too small for the ring. He tried to fathom the depths of the sunbonnet, but it was dented on one side, and he could discern only a single pale blue eye and a thin black arch of eyebrow.

"Well," said Fleming, "is it a go?"

"Of course ye 'll be comin' back for it again," said the girl slowly.

There was so much of hopeless disappointment at that prospect in her voice that Fleming laughed outright. "I 'm afraid I shall, for I value the ring very much," he said.

The girl handed him the pan. "It 's our bread pan," she said.

It might have been anything, for it was by no means new; indeed, it was battered on one side and the bottom seemed to have been broken; but it would serve, and Fleming was anxious to be off. "Thank you," he said briefly, and turned away. The hound barked again as he passed; he heard the girl say, "Shut your head, Tige!" and saw her turn back into the kitchen, still holding the ring before the sunbonnet.

When he reached the woods, he attacked the outcrop he had noticed, and detached

with his hands and the aid of a sharp rock enough of the loose soil to fill the pan. This he took to the spring, and, lowering the pan in the pool, began to wash out its contents with the centrifugal movement of the experienced prospector. The saturated red soil overflowed the brim with that liquid ooze known as "slumgullion," and turned the crystal pool to the color of blood until the soil was washed away. Then the smaller stones were carefully removed and examined, and then another washing of the now nearly empty pan showed the fine black sand covering the bottom. This was in turn as gently washed away.

Alas! the clean pan showed only one or two minute glistening yellow scales, like pinheads, adhering from their specific gravity to the bottom; gold, indeed, but merely enough to indicate "the color," and common to ordinary prospecting in his own locality.

He tried another panful with the same result. He became aware that the pan was leaky, and that infinite care alone prevented the bottom from falling out during the washing. Still it was an experiment, and the result a failure.

Fleming was too old a prospector to take his disappointment seriously. Indeed, it was characteristic of that performance and that period that failure left neither hopelessness nor loss of faith behind it; the prospector had simply miscalculated the exact locality, and was equally as ready to try his luck again. But Fleming thought it high time to return to his own mining work in camp, and at once set off to return the pan to its girlish owner and recover his ring.

As he approached the cabin again, he heard the sound of singing. It was evidently the girl's voice, uplifted in what seemed to be a fragment of some negro camp-meeting hymn: —

"Dar was a poor man and his name it was Lazarum,
Lord bress de Lamb — glory hallelugerum!
Lord bress de Lamb!"

The first two lines had a brisk movement, accented apparently by the clapping of hands or the beating of a tin pan, but the refrain, "Lord bress de Lamb," was drawn out in a lugubrious chant of infinite tenuity.

"The rich man died and he went straight to hellerum,
Lord bress de Lamb — glory hallelugerum!
Lord bress de Lamb!"

Fleming paused at the cabin door. Before he could rap the voice rose again: —

"When ye see a poo' man be sure to give him crumbsorum,
Lord bress de Lamb — glory hallelugerum!
Lord bress de Lamb!"

At the end of this interminable refrain, drawn out in a youthful nasal contralto, Fleming knocked. The girl instantly appeared, holding the ring in her fingers. "I reckoned it was you," she said, with an affected briskness, to conceal her evident dislike at parting with the trinket. "There it is!"

But Fleming was too astounded to speak. With the opening of the door the sunbonnet had fallen back like a buggy top, disclosing for the first time the head and shoulders of the wearer. She was not a child, but a smart young woman of seventeen or eighteen, and much of his embarrassment arose from the consciousness that he had no reason whatever for having believed her otherwise.

"I hope I did n't interrupt your singing," he said awkwardly.

"It was only one o' mammy's camp-meetin' songs," said the girl.

"Your mother? Is she in?" he asked, glancing past the girl into the kitchen.

"'T ain't mother — she 's dead. Mammy 's our old nurse. She 's gone to Jimtown, and taken my duds to get some new ones fitted to me. These are some o' mother's."

This accounted for her strange appearance; but Fleming noticed that the girl's manner had not the slightest consciousness of their unbecomingness, nor of the charms of face and figure they had marred.

She looked at him curiously. "Hev you got religion?"

"Well, no!" said Fleming, laughing; "I 'm afraid not."

"Dad hez — he 's got it pow'ful."

"Is that the reason he don't like miners?" asked Fleming.

"'Take not to yourself the mammon of unrighteousness,'" said the girl, with the confident air of repeating a lesson. "That 's what the Book says."

"But I read the Bible, too," replied the young man.

"Dad says, 'The letter killeth'!" said the girl sententiously.

Fleming looked at the trophies nailed on

the walls with a vague wonder if this peculiar Scriptural destructiveness had anything to do with his skill as a marksman. The girl followed his eye.

"Dad 's a mighty hunter afore the Lord."

"What does he do with these skins?"

"Trades 'em off for grub and fixin's. But he don't believe in trottin' round in the mud for gold."

"Don't you suppose these animals would have preferred it if he had? Gold hunting takes nothing from anybody."

The girl stared at him, and then, to his great surprise, laughed instead of being angry. It was a very fascinating laugh in her imperfectly nourished pale face, and her little teeth revealed the bluish milky whiteness of pips of young Indian corn.

"Wot yer lookin' at?" she asked frankly.

"You," he replied, with equal frankness.

"It 's them duds," she said, looking down at her dress; "I reckon I ain't got the hang o' 'em."

Yet there was not the slightest tone of embarrassment or even coquetry in her manner, as with both hands she tried to gather in the loose folds around her waist.

"Let me help you," he said gravely.

She lifted up her arms with childlike simplicity and backed toward him as he stepped behind her, drew in the folds, and pinned them around what proved a very small waist indeed. Then he untied the apron, took it off, folded it in half, and retied its curtailed proportions around the waist. "It does feel a heap easier," she said, with a little shiver of satisfaction, as she lifted her round cheek, and the tail of her blue eyes with their brown lashes, over her shoulder. It was a tempting moment — but Jack felt that the whole race of gold hunters was on trial just then, and was adamant! Perhaps he was a gentle fellow at heart, too.

"I could loop up that dress also, if I had more pins," he remarked tentatively. Jack had sisters of his own.

The pins were forthcoming. In this operation — a kind of festooning — the girl's petticoat, a piece of common washed-out blue flannel, as pale as her eyes, but of the commonest material, became visible, but without fear or reproach to either.

"There, that looks more tidy," said Jack,

critically surveying his work and a little of the small ankles revealed. The girl also examined it carefully by its reflection on the surface of the saucepan. "Looks a little like a chiny girl, don't it?"

Jack would have resented this, thinking she meant a Chinese, until he saw her pointing to a cheap crockery ornament, representing a Dutch shepherdess, on the shelf. There was some resemblance.

"You beat mammy out o' sight!" she exclaimed gleefully. "It will jest set her clear crazy when she sees me."

"Then you had better say you did it yourself," said Fleming.

"Why?" asked the girl, suddenly opening her eyes on him with relentless frankness.

"You said your father did n't like miners, and he might n't like your lending your pan to me."

"I 'm more afraid o' lyin' than o' dad," she said with an elevation of moral sentiment that was, however, slightly weakened by the addition, "Mammy 'll say anything I 'll tell her to say."

"Well, good-by," said Fleming, extending his hand.

"Ye did n't tell me what luck ye had with the pan," she said, delaying taking his hand.

Fleming shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, my usual luck, — nothing," he returned, with a smile.

"Ye seem to keer more for gettin' yer old ring back than for any luck," she continued. "I reckon you ain't much o' a miner."

"I 'm afraid not."

"Ye did n't say wot yer name was, in case dad wants to know."

"I don't think he will want to; but it 's John Fleming."

She took his hand. "You did n't tell me yours," he said, holding the little red fingers, "in case *I* wanted to know."

It pleased her to consider the rejoinder intensely witty. She showed all her little teeth, threw away his hand, and said: —

"G' long with ye, Mr. Fleming. It 's Tinka" —

"Tinker?"

"Yes; short for Katinka, — Katinka Jallinger."

"Good-by, Miss Jallinger."

"Good-by. Dad's name is Henry Boone Jallinger, of Kentucky, ef ye was ever askin'."

"Thank you."

He turned away as she swiftly reëntered the house. As he walked away, he half expected to hear her voice uplifted again in the camp-meeting chant, but he was disappointed. When he reached the top of the hill he turned and looked back at the cabin.

She was apparently waiting for this, and waved him an adieu with the humble pan he had borrowed. It flashed a moment dazzlingly as it caught the declining sun, and then went out, even obliterating the little figure behind it.

PART II

Mr. Jack Fleming was indeed "not much of a miner." He and his partners — both as young, hopeful, and inefficient as himself — had for three months worked a claim in a mountain mining settlement which yielded them a certain amount of healthy exercise, good-humored grumbling, and exalted independence. To dig for three or four hours in the morning, smoke their pipes under a redwood-tree for an hour at noon, take up their labors again until sunset, when

they "washed up" and gathered sufficient gold to pay for their daily wants, was, without their seeking it, or even knowing it, the realization of a charming socialistic ideal which better men than themselves had only dreamed of. Fleming fell back into this refined barbarism, giving little thought to his woodland experience, and no revelation of it to his partners. He had transacted their business at the mining town. His deviations *en route* were nothing to them, and small account to himself.

The third day after his return he was lying under a redwood when his partner approached him.

"You are n't uneasy in your mind about any unpaid bill — say a wash bill — that you 're owing?"

"Why?"

"There 's a big nigger woman in camp looking for you; she 's got a folded account paper in her hand. It looks deucedly like a bill."

"There must be some mistake," suggested Fleming, sitting up.

"She says not, and she 's got your name pat enough! Faulkner" (his other partner)

"headed her straight up the gulch, away from camp, while I came down to warn you. So if you choose to skedaddle into the brush out there and lie low until we get her away, we 'll fix it!"

"Nonsense! I 'll see her."

His partner looked aghast at this temerity, but Fleming, jumping to his feet, at once set out to meet his mysterious visitor. This was no easy matter, as the ingenious Faulkner was laboriously leading his charge up the steep gulch road, with great politeness, but many audible misgivings as to whether this was not "Jack Fleming's day for going to Jamestown."

He was further lightening the journey by cheering accounts of the recent depredations of bears and panthers in that immediate locality. When overtaken by Fleming he affected a start of joyful surprise, to conceal the look of warning which Fleming did not heed, — having no eyes but for Faulkner's companion. She was a very fat negro woman, panting with exertion and suppressed impatience. Fleming's heart was filled with compunction.

"Is you Marse Fleming?" she gasped.

"Yes," said Fleming gently. "What can I do for you?"

"Well! Ye kin pick dis yar insek, dis caterpillier," she said, pointing to Faulkner, "off my paf. Ye kin tell dis yar chipmunk dat when he comes to showin' me mule tracks for b'ar tracks, he 's barkin' up de wrong tree! Dat when he tells me dat he sees panfers a-promenadin' round in de short grass or hidin' behime rocks in de open, he hain't talkin' to no nigger chile, but a growed woman! Ye kin tell him dat Mammy Curtis lived in de woods afo' he was born, and hez seen more b'ars and mountain lyuns dan he hez hairs in his mustarches."

The word "Mammy" brought a flash of recollection to Fleming.

"I am very sorry," he began; but to his surprise the negro woman burst into a good-tempered laugh. "All right, honey! S' long 's you is Marse Fleming and de man dat took dat 'ar pan offer Tinka de odder day, I ain't mindin' yo' frens' bedevilments. I 've got somefin fo' you, yar, and a little box," and she handed him a folded paper.

Fleming felt himself reddening, he knew not why, at which Faulkner discreetly but

ostentatiously withdrew, conveying to his other partner painful conviction that Fleming had borrowed a pan from a traveling tinker, whose negro wife was even now presenting a bill for the same, and demanding a settlement. Relieved by his departure, Fleming hurriedly tore open the folded paper. It was a letter written upon a leaf torn out of an old account book, whose ruled lines had undoubtedly given his partners the idea that it was a bill. Fleming hurriedly read the following, traced with a pencil in a schoolgirl's hand: —

MR. J. FLEMING.

Dear Sir, — After you went away that day I took that pan you brought back to mix a batch of bread and biscuits. The next morning at breakfast dad says: "What 's gone o' them thar biscuits — my teeth is just broke with them — they 're so gritty — they 're abominable! What 's this?" says he, and with that he chucks over to me two or three flakes of gold that was in them. You see what had happened, Mr. Fleming, was this! You had better luck than you was knowing of! It was this way! Some of

the gold you washed had got slipped into the sides of the pan where it was broke, and the sticky dough must have brought it out, and I kneaded them up unbeknowing. Of course I had to tell a wicked lie, but "Be ye all things to all men," says the Book, and I thought you ought to know your good luck, and I send mammy with this and the gold in a little box. Of course, if dad was a hunter of Mammon and not of God's own beasts, he would have been mighty keen about finding where it came from, but he allows it was in the water in our near spring. So good-by. Do you care for your ring now as much as you did?

Yours very respectfully,

KATINKA JALLINGER.

As Mr. Fleming glanced up from the paper, mammy put a small cardboard box in his hand. For an instant he hesitated to open it, not knowing how far mammy was intrusted with the secret. To his great relief she said briskly: "Well, dar! now dat job 's done gone and offen my han's, I allow to quit and jest get off dis yer camp afo' ye kin shake a stick. So don't tell me nuffin I ain't gotter tell when I goes back."

Fleming understood. "You can tell her I thank her — and — I 'll attend to it," he said vaguely; "that is — I" —

"Hold dar! that 's just enuff, honey — no mo'! So long to ye and youse folks."

He watched her striding away toward the main road, and then opened the box.

It contained three flakes of placer or surface gold, weighing in all about a quarter of an ounce. They could easily have slipped into the interstices of the broken pan and not have been observed by him. If this was the result of the washing of a single pan — and he could now easily imagine that other flakes might have escaped — what — But he stopped, dazed and bewildered at the bare suggestion. He gazed upon the vanishing figure of "mammy." Could she — could Katinka — have the least suspicion of the possibilities of this discovery? Or had Providence put the keeping of this secret into the hands of those who least understood its importance? For an instant he thought of running after her with a word of caution; but on reflection he saw that this might awaken her suspicion and precipitate a discovery by another.

His only safety for the present was silence, until he could repeat his experiment. And that must be done quickly.

How should he get away without his partners' knowledge of his purpose? He was too loyal to them to wish to keep this good fortune to himself, but he was not yet sure of his good fortune. It might be only a little "pocket" which he had just emptied; it might be a larger one which another trial would exhaust.

He had put up no "notice;" he might find it already in possession of Katinka's father, or any chance prospector like himself. In either case he would be covered with ridicule by his partners and the camp, or more seriously rebuked for his carelessness and stupidity. No! he could not tell them the truth; nor could he lie. He would say he was called away for a day on private business.

Luckily for him, the active imagination of his partners was even now helping him. The theory of the "tinker" and the "pan" was indignantly rejected by his other partner. His blushes and embarrassment were suddenly remembered by Faulkner, and by the

time he reached his cabin, they had settled that the negro woman had brought him a love letter! He was young and good looking; what was more natural than that he should have some distant love affair?

His embarrassed statement that he must leave early the next morning on business that he could not at *present* disclose was considered amply confirmatory, and received with maliciously significant acquiescence. "Only," said Faulkner, "at *your* age, sonny," — he was nine months older than Fleming, — "I should have gone *to-night.*" Surely Providence was favoring him!

He was off early the next morning. He was sorely tempted to go first to the cabin, but every moment was precious until he had tested the proof of his good fortune.

It was high noon before he reached the fringe of forest. A few paces farther and he found the spring and outcrop. To avert his partners' suspicions he had not brought his own implements, but had borrowed a pan, spade, and pick from a neighbor's claim before setting out. The spot was apparently in the same condition as when he left it, and with a beating heart he at once set to work,

an easy task with his new implements. He nervously watched the water overflow the pan of dirt at its edges until, emptied of earth and gravel, the black sand alone covered the bottom. A slight premonition of disappointment followed; a rich indication would have shown itself before this! A few more workings, and the pan was quite empty except for a few pin-points of "color," almost exactly the quantity he found before. He washed another pan with the same result. Another taken from a different level of the outcrop yielded neither more nor less! There was no mistake: it was a failure! His discovery had been only a little "pocket," and the few flakes she had sent him were the first and last of that discovery.

He sat down with a sense of relief; he could face his partners again without disloyalty; he could see that pretty little figure once more without the compunction of having incurred her father's prejudices by locating a permanent claim so near his cabin. In fact, he could carry out his partners' fancy to the letter!

He quickly heaped his implements together and turned to leave the wood; but he

was confronted by a figure that at first he scarcely recognized. Yet — it was Katinka! the young girl of the cabin, who had sent him the gold. She was dressed differently — perhaps in her ordinary every-day garments — a bright sprigged muslin, a chip hat with blue ribbons set upon a coil of luxurious brown hair. But what struck him most was that the girlish and diminutive character of the figure had vanished with her ill-fitting clothes; the girl that stood before him was of ordinary height, and of a prettiness and grace of figure that he felt would have attracted anywhere. Fleming felt himself suddenly embarrassed, — a feeling that was not lessened when he noticed that her pretty lip was compressed and her eyebrows a little straightened as she gazed at him.

"Ye made a bee line for the woods, I see," she said coldly. "I allowed ye might have been droppin' in to our house first."

"So I should," said Fleming quickly, "but I thought I ought to first make sure of the information you took the trouble to send me." He hesitated to speak of the ill luck he had just experienced; he could laugh at it himself — but would she?

"And ye got a new pan?" she said half poutingly.

Here seemed his opportunity. "Yes, but I 'm afraid it has n't the magic of yours. I have n't even got the color. I believe you bewitched your old pan."

Her face flushed a little and brightened, and her lip relaxed with a smile. "Go 'long with yer! Ye don't mean to say ye had no luck to-day?"

"None — but in seeing you."

Her eyes sparkled. "Ye see, I said all 'long ye were n't much o' a miner. Ye ain't got no faith. Ef ye had as much as a grain o' mustard seed, ye 'd remove mountains; it 's in the Book."

"Yes, and this mountain is on the bedrock, and my faith is not strong enough," he said laughingly. "And then, that would be having faith in Mammon, and you don't want me to have *that*."

She looked at him curiously. "I jest reckon ye don't care a picayune whether ye strike anything or not," she said half admiringly.

"To please you I 'll try again, if you 'll look on. Perhaps you 'll bring me luck as

you did before. You shall take the pan. I will fill it and you shall wash it out. You 'll be my *mascot*."

She stiffened a little at this, and then said pertly, "Wot 's that?"

"My good fairy."

She smiled again, this time with a new color in her pale face. "Maybe I am," she said, with sudden gravity.

He quickly filled the pan again with soil, brought it to the spring, and first washed out the greater bulk of loose soil. "Now come here and kneel down beside me," he said, "and take the pan and do as I show you."

She knelt down obediently. Suddenly she lifted her little hand with a gesture of warning. "Wait a minit — jest a minit — till the water runs clear again."

The pool had become slightly discolored from the first washing.

"That makes no difference," he said quickly.

"Ah! but wait, please!" She laid her brown hand upon his arm; a pleasant warmth seemed to follow her touch. Then she said joyously, "Look down there."

"Where?" he asked.

"There — don't ye see it?"

"See what?"

"You and me!"

He looked where she pointed. The pool had settled, resumed its mirror-like calm, and reflected distinctly, not only their two bending faces, but their two figures kneeling side by side. Two tall redwoods rose on either side of them, like the columns before an altar.

There was a moment of silence. The drone of a bumble-bee near by seemed to make the silence swim drowsily in their ears; far off they heard the faint beat of a woodpecker. The suggestion of their kneeling figures in this magic mirror was vague, unreasoning, yet for the moment none the less irresistible. His arm instinctively crept around her little waist as he whispered, — he scarce knew what he said, — "Perhaps here is the treasure I am seeking."

The girl laughed, released herself, and sprang up; the pan sank ingloriously to the bottom of the pool, where Fleming had to grope for it, assisted by Tinka, who rolled up her sleeve to her elbow. For a minute

or two they washed gravely, but with no better success than attended his own individual efforts. The result in the bottom of the pan was the same. Fleming laughed.

"You see," he said gayly, "the Mammon of unrighteousness is not for me — at least, so near your father's tabernacle."

"That makes no difference now," said the girl quickly, "for dad is goin' to move, anyway, farther up the mountains. He says it 's gettin' too crowded for him here — when the last settler took up a section three miles off."

"And are *you* going too?" asked the young man earnestly.

Tinka nodded her brown head. Fleming heaved a genuine sigh. "Well, I 'll try my hand here a little longer. I 'll put up a notice of claim; I don't suppose your father would object. You know he could n't *legally*."

"I reckon ye might do it ef ye wanted — ef ye was *that* keen on gettin' gold!" said Tinka, looking away. There was something in the girl's tone which this budding lover resented. He had become sensitive.

"Oh, well," he said, "I see that it might

make unpleasantness with your father. I only thought," he went on, with tenderer tentativeness, "that it would be pleasant to work here near you."

"Ye 'd be only wastin' yer time," she said darkly.

Fleming rose gravely. "Perhaps you 're right," he answered sadly and a little bitterly, "and I 'll go at once."

He walked to the spring, and gathered up his tools. "Thank you again for your kindness, and good-by."

He held out his hand, which she took passively, and he moved away.

But he had not gone far before she called him. He turned to find her still standing where he had left her, her little hands clinched at her side, and her widely opened eyes staring at him. Suddenly she ran at him, and, catching the lapels of his coat in both hands, held him rigidly fast.

"No! no! ye sha'n't go — ye must n't go!" she said, with hysterical intensity. "I want to tell ye something! Listen! — you — you — Mr. Fleming! I 've been a wicked, wicked girl! I 've told lies to dad — to mammy — to *you!* I 've borne false wit-

ness — I 'm worse than Sapphira — I 've acted a big lie. Oh, Mr. Fleming, I 've made you come back here for nothing! Ye did n't find no gold the other day. There was n't any. It was all me! I — I — *salted that pan!*"

"Salted it!" echoed Fleming, in amazement.

"Yes, 'salted it,'" she faltered; "that 's what dad says they call it — what those wicked sons of Mammon do to their claims to sell them. I — put gold in the pan myself; it was n't there before."

"But why?" gasped Fleming.

She stopped. Then suddenly the fountains in the deep of her blue eyes were broken up; she burst into a sob, and buried her head in her hands, and her hands on his shoulder. "Because — because" — she sobbed against him — "*I wanted you* to come back!"

He folded her in his arms. He kissed her lovingly, forgivingly, gratefully, tearfully, smilingly — and paused; then he kissed her sympathetically, understandingly, apologetically, explanatorily, in lieu of other conversation. Then, becoming coherent, he asked, —

"But *where* did you get the gold?"

"Oh," she said between fitful and despairing sobs, "somewhere! — I don't know — out of the old Run — long ago — when I was little! I did n't never dare say anything to dad — he 'd have been crazy mad at his own daughter diggin' — and I never cared nor thought a single bit about it until I saw you."

"And you have never been there since?"

"Never."

"Nor anybody else?"

"No."

Suddenly she threw back her head; her chip hat fell back from her face, rosy with a dawning inspiration! "Oh, say, Jack! — you don't think that — after all this time — there might" — She did not finish the sentence, but, grasping his hand, cried, "Come!"

She caught up the pan, he seized the shovel and pick, and they raced like boy and girl down the hill. When within a few hundred feet of the house she turned at right angles into the clearing, and saying, "Don't be skeered; dad 's away," ran boldly on, still holding his hand, along the little

valley. At its farther extremity they came to the "Run," a half-dried watercourse whose rocky sides were marked by the erosion of winter torrents. It was apparently as wild and secluded as the forest spring. "Nobody ever came here," said the girl hurriedly, "after dad sunk the well at the house."

One or two pools still remained in the Run from the last season's flow, water enough to wash out several pans of dirt.

Selecting a spot where the white quartz was visible, Fleming attacked the bank with the pick. After one or two blows it began to yield and crumble away at his feet. He washed out a panful perfunctorily, more intent on the girl than his work; she, eager, alert, and breathless, had changed places with him, and become the anxious prospector! But the result was the same. He threw away the pan with a laugh, to take her little hand! But she whispered, "Try again."

He attacked the bank once more with such energy that a great part of it caved and fell, filling the pan and even burying the shovel in the débris. He unearthed the latter while Tinka was struggling to get out the pan.

"The mean thing is stuck and won't move," she said pettishly. "I think it's broken now, too, just like ours."

Fleming came laughingly forward, and, putting one arm around the girl's waist, attempted to assist her with the other. The pan was immovable, and, indeed, seemed to be broken and bent. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation and began hurriedly to brush away the dirt and throw the soil out of the pan.

In another moment he had revealed a fragment of decomposed quartz, like discolored honeycombed cheese, half filling the pan. But on its side, where the pick had struck it glancingly, there was a yellow streak like a ray of sunshine! And as he strove to lift it he felt in that unmistakable omnipotency of weight that it was seamed and celled with gold.

The news of Mr. Fleming's engagement, two weeks later, to the daughter of the recluse religious hunter who had made a big strike at Lone Run, excited some skeptical discussion, even among the honest congratulations of his partners.

"That 's a mighty queer story how Jack got that girl sweet on him just by borrowin' a prospectin' pan of her," said Faulkner, between the whiffs of his pipe under the trees. "You and me might have borrowed a hundred prospectin' pans and never got even a drink thrown in. Then to think of that old preachin' coon-hunter hevin' to give in and pass his strike over to his daughter's feller, jest because he had scruples about gold diggin' himself. He 'd hev booted you and me outer his ranch first."

"Lord, ye ain't takin' no stock in that hogwash," responded the other. "Why, everybody knows old man Jallinger pretended to be sick o' miners and minin' camps, and could n't bear to hev 'em near him, only jest because he himself was all the while secretly prospectin' the whole lode and did n't want no interlopers. It was only when Fleming nippled in by gettin' hold o' the girl that Jallinger knew the secret was out, and that 's the way he bought him off. Why, Jack was n't no miner — never was — ye could see that. *He* never struck anything. The only treasure he found in the woods was Tinka Jallinger!"

A BELLE OF CAÑADA CITY

Cissy was tying her hat under her round chin before a small glass at her window. The window gave upon a background of serrated mountain and olive-shadowed cañon, with a faint additional outline of a higher snow level — the only dreamy suggestion of the whole landscape. The foreground was a glaringly fresh and unpicturesque mining town, whose irregular attempts at regularity were set forth with all the cruel, uncompromising clearness of the Californian atmosphere. There was the straight Main Street with its new brick block of "stores," ending abruptly against a tangled bluff; there was the ruthless clearing in the sedate pines where the hideous spire of the new church imitated the soaring of the solemn shafts it had displaced with almost irreligious mockery. Yet this foreground was Cissy's world — her life, her sole girlish experience. She did not, however, bother her pretty head with the view just then, but moved her

cheek up and down before the glass, the better to examine by the merciless glare of the sunlight a few freckles that starred the hollows of her temples. Like others of her sex, she was a poor critic of what was her real beauty, and quarreled with that peculiar texture of her healthy skin which made her face as eloquent in her sun-kissed cheek as in her bright eyes and expression. Nevertheless, she was somewhat consoled by the ravishing effect of the bowknot she had just tied, and turned away not wholly dissatisfied. Indeed, as the acknowledged belle of Cañada City and the daughter of its principal banker, small wonder that a certain frank vanity and childlike imperiousness were among her faults — and her attractions.

She bounded down the stairs and into the front parlor, for their house possessed the unheard-of luxury of a double drawing-room, albeit the second apartment contained a desk, and was occasionally used by Cissy's father in private business interviews with anxious seekers of "advances" who shunned the publicity of the bank. Here she instantly flew into the arms of her bosom

friend, Miss Piney Tibbs, a girl only a shade or two less pretty than herself, who, always more or less ill at ease in these splendors, was awaiting her impatiently. For Miss Tibbs was merely the daughter of the hotel-keeper; and although Tibbs was a Southerner, and had owned "his own niggers" in the States, she was of inferior position and a protégée of Cissy's.

"Thank goodness you 've come," exclaimed Miss Tibbs, "for I 've bin sittin' here till I nigh took root. What kep' ye?"

"How does it look?" responded Cissy, as a relevant reply.

The "it" referred to Cissy's new hat, and to the young girl the coherence was perfectly plain. Miss Tibbs looked at "it" severely. It would not do for a protégée to be too complaisant.

"Hem! Must have cost a heap o' money."

"It did! Came from the best milliner in San Francisco."

"Of course," said Piney, with half assumed envy. "When your popper runs the bank and just wallows in gold!"

"Never mind, dear," replied Cissy cheerfully. "So 'll *your* popper some day. I 'm

goin' to get mine to let *your* popper into something — Ditch stocks and such. Yes! True, O King! Popper 'll do anything for me," she added a little loftily.

Loyal as Piney was to her friend, she was by no means convinced of this. She knew the difference between the two men, and had a vivid recollection of hearing her own father express his opinion of Cissy's respected parent as a "Gold Shark" and "Quartz Miner Crusher." It did not, however, affect her friendship for Cissy. She only said, "Let 's come!" caught Cissy around the waist, pranced with her out into the veranda, and gasped, out of breath, "Where are we goin' first?"

"Down Main Street," said Cissy promptly.

"And let 's stop at Markham's store. They 've got some new things in from Sacramento," added Piney.

"Country styles," returned Cissy, with a supercilious air. "No! Besides, Markham's head clerk is gettin' too presumptuous. Just guess! He asked me, while I was buyin' something, if I enjoyed the dance last Monday!"

"But you danced with him," said the simple Piney, in astonishment.

"But not in his store among his customers," said Cissy sapiently. "No! we 're going down Main Street past Secamps'. Those Secamp girls are sure to be at their windows, looking out. This hat will just turn 'em green — greener than ever."

"You 're just horrid, Ciss!" said Piney, with admiration.

"And then," continued Cissy, "we 'll just sail down past the new block to the parson's and make a call."

"Oh, I see," said Piney archly. "It 'll be just about the time when the new engineer of the mill works has a clean shirt on, and is smoking his cigyar before the office."

Cissy tossed her hat disdainfully. "Much anybody cares whether he 's there or not! I have n't forgotten how he showed us over the mill the other day in a pair of overalls, just like a workman."

"But they say he 's awfully smart and well educated, and need n't work, and I 'm sure it 's very nice of him to dress just like the other men when he 's with 'em," urged Piney.

"Bah! That was just to show that he did n't care what we thought of him, he 's

that conceited! And it was n't respectful, considering one of the directors was there, all dressed up. Don't tell me! You can see it in his eye, looking you over without blinking and then turning away as if he 'd got enough of you. He makes me tired."

Piney did not reply. The engineer had seemed to her to be a singularly attractive young man, yet she was equally impressed with Cissy's superior condition, which could find flaws in such perfection. Following her friend down the steps of the veranda, they passed into the staring graveled walk of the new garden, only recently recovered from the wild wood, its accurate diamond and heart shaped beds of vivid green set in white quartz borders giving it the appearance of elaborately iced confectionery. A few steps further brought them to the road and the wooden "sidewalk" to Main Street, which carried civic improvements to the hillside, and Mr. Trixit's very door. Turning down this thoroughfare, they stopped laughing, and otherwise assumed a conscious half artificial air; for it was the hour when Cañada City lounged listlessly before its shops, its saloons, its offices and mills, or

even held lazy meetings in the dust of the roadway, and the passage down the principal street of its two prettiest girls was an event to be viewed as if it were a civic procession. Hats flew off as they passed; place was freely given; impeding barrels and sacks were removed from the wooden pavement, and preoccupied indwellers hastily summoned to the front door to do homage to Cissy Trixit and Piney as they went by. Not but that Cañada City, in the fierce and unregenerate days of its youth, had seen fairer and higher colored faces, more gayly bedizened, on its thoroughfares, but never anything so fresh and innocent. Men stood there all unconsciously, reverencing their absent mothers, sisters, and daughters, in their spontaneous homage to the pair, and seemed to feel the wholesome breath of their Eastern homes wafted from the freshly ironed skirts of these foolish virgins as they rustled by. I am afraid that neither Cissy nor Piney appreciated this feeling; few women did at that time; indeed, these young ladies assumed a slight air of hauteur.

"Really, they do stare so," said Cissy, with eyes dilating with pleasurable emotion;

"we 'll have to take the back street next time!"

Piney, proud in the glory reflected from Cissy, and in her own, answered, "We will — sure!"

There was only one interruption to this triumphal progress, and that was so slight as to be noticed by only one of the two girls. As they passed the new works at the mill, the new engineer, as Piney had foreseen, was leaning against the doorpost, smoking a pipe. He took his hat from his head and his pipe from his mouth as they approached, and greeted them with an easy "Good-afternoon," yet with a glance that was quietly observant and tolerantly critical.

"There!" said Cissy, when they had passed, "did n't I tell you? Did you ever see such conceit in your born days? I hope you did not look at him."

Piney, conscious of having done so, and of having blushed under his scrutiny, nevertheless stoutly asserted that she had merely looked at him "to see who it was." But Cissy was placated by passing the Secamps' cottage, from whose window the three strapping daughters of John Secamp, lately an

emigrant from Missouri, were, as Cissy had surmised, lightening the household duties by gazing at the — to them — unwonted wonders of the street. Whether their complexions, still bearing traces of the alkali dust and inefficient nourishment of the plains, took a more yellow tone from the spectacle of Cissy's hat, I cannot say. Cissy thought they did; perhaps Piney was nearer the truth when she suggested that they were only "looking" to enable them to make a home-made copy of the hat next week.

Their progress forward and through the outskirts of the town was of the same triumphal character. Teamsters withheld their oaths and their uplifted whips as the two girls passed by; weary miners, toiling in ditches, looked up with a pleasure that was half reminiscent of their past; younger skylarkers stopped in their horse-play with half smiling, half apologetic faces; more ambitious riders on the highway urged their horses to greater speed under the girls' inspiring eyes, and "Vaquero Billy," charging them, full tilt, brought up his mustang on its haunches and rigid forelegs, with a sweeping bow of his sombrero, within a foot of

their artfully simulated terror! In this way they at last reached the clearing in the forest, the church with its ostentatious spire, and the Reverend Mr. Windibrook's dwelling, otherwise humorously known as "The Pastorage," where Cissy intended to call.

The Reverend Mr. Windibrook had been selected by his ecclesiastical superiors to minister to the spiritual wants of Cañada City as being what was called a "hearty" man. Certainly, if considerable lung capacity, absence of reserve, and power of handshaking and back slapping were necessary to the redemption of Cañada City, Mr. Windibrook's ministration would have been successful. But, singularly enough, the rude miner was apt to resent this familiarity, and it is recorded that Isaac Wood, otherwise known as "Grizzly Woods," once responded to a cheerful back slap from the reverend gentleman by an ostentatiously friendly hug which nearly dislocated the parson's ribs. Perhaps Mr. Windibrook was more popular on account of his admiring enthusiasm of the prosperous money-getting members of his flock and a singular sympathy with their methods, and Mr. Trixit's daring specula-

tions were an especially delightful theme to him.

"Ah, Miss Trixit," he said, as Cissy entered the little parlor, "and how is your dear father? Still startling the money market with his fearless speculations? This, brother Jones," turning to a visitor, "is the daughter of our Napoleon of finance, Montagu Trixit. Only last week, in that deal in 'the Comstock,' he cleared fifty thousand dollars! Yes, sir," repeating it with unction, "fifty — thousand — dollars! — in about two hours, and with a single stroke of the pen! I believe I am not overstating, Miss Trixit?" he added, appealing to Cissy with a portentous politeness that was as badly fitting as his previous "heartiness."

Cissy colored slightly. "I don't know," she said simply. She was perfectly truthful. She knew nothing of her father's business, except the vague reputation of his success.

Her modesty, however, produced a singular hilarity in Mr. Windibrook, and a playful push. "*You* don't know? Ha, but *I* do. Yes, sir," — to the visitor, — "I have reason to remember it. I called upon him the next day. I used, sir, the freedom of

an old friend. 'Trixit,' I said, clapping my hand on his shoulder, 'the Lord has been good to you. I congratulate you.'

"'H'm!' he said, without looking up. 'What do you reckon those congratulations are worth?"

"Many a man, sir, who did n't know his style, would have been staggered. But I knew my man. I looked him straight in the eye. 'A new organ,' I said, 'and as good a one as Sacramento can turn out.'

"He took up a piece of paper, scrawled a few lines on it to his cashier, and said, 'Will that do?'" Mr. Windibrook's voice sank to a thrilling whisper. "It was an order for one thousand dollars! Fact, sir. *That* is the father of this young lady."

"Ye had better luck than Bishop Briggs had with old Johnson, the Excelsior Bank president," said the visitor, encouraged by Windibrook's "heartiness" into a humorous retrospect. "Briggs goes to him for a subscription for a new fence round the buryin'-ground — the old one havin' rotted away. 'Ye don't want no fence,' sez Johnson, short like. 'No fence round a buryin'-ground?' sez Briggs, starin'. 'No! Them as is *in*

the buryin'-ground can't get *out*, and them as *is n't* don't want to get *in*, nohow! So you kin just travel — I ain't givin' money away on uselessnesses!' Ha! ha!"

A chill silence followed, which checked even Piney's giggle. Mr. Windibrook evidently had no "heartiness" for non-subscribing humor. "There are those who can jest with sacred subjects," he said ponderously, "but I have always found Mr. Trixit, though blunt, eminently practical. Your father is still away," he added, shifting the conversation to Cissy, "hovering wherever he can extract the honey to store up for the provision of age. An industrious worker."

"He 's still away," said Cissy, feeling herself on safe ground, though she was not aware of her father's entomological habits. "In San Francisco, I think."

She was glad to get away from Mr. Windibrook's "heartiness" and console herself with Mrs. Windibrook's constitutional depression, which was partly the result of nervous dyspepsia and her husband's boisterous cordiality. "I suppose, dear, you are dreadfully anxious about your father when he is away from home?" she said to Cissy, with a sympathetic sigh.

Cissy, conscious of never having felt a moment's anxiety, and accustomed to his absences, replied naïvely, "Why?"

"Oh," responded Mrs. Windibrook, "on account of his great business responsibilities, you know; so much depends upon him."

Again Cissy did not comprehend; she could not understand why this masterful man, her father, who was equal to her own and, it seemed, everybody's needs, had any responsibility, or was not as infallible and constant as the sunshine or the air she breathed. Without being his confidante, or even his associate, she had since her mother's death no other experience; youthfully alive to the importance of their wealth, it seemed to her, however, only a natural result of being *his* daughter. She smiled vaguely and a little impatiently. They might have talked to her about *herself;* it was a little tiresome to always have to answer questions about her "popper." Nevertheless, she availed herself of Mrs. Windibrook's invitation to go into the garden and see the new summer-house that had been put up among the pines, and gradually diverted her hostess's conversation into gossip of the town. If it was

somewhat lugubrious and hesitating, it was, however, a relief to Cissy, and bearing chiefly upon the vicissitudes of others, gave her the comforting glow of comparison.

Touching the complexion of the Secamp girls, Mrs. Windibrook attributed it to their great privations in the alkali desert. "One day," continued Mrs. Windibrook, "when their father was ill with fever and ague, they drove the cattle twenty miles to water through that dreadful poisonous dust, and when they got there their lips were cracked and bleeding and their eyelids like burning knives, and Mamie Secamp's hair, which used to be a beautiful brown like your own, my dear, was bleached into a rusty yellow."

"And they *will* wear colors that don't suit them," said Cissy impatiently.

"Never mind, dear," said Mrs. Windibrook ambiguously; "I suppose they will have their reward."

Nor was the young engineer discussed in a lighter vein. "It pains me dreadfully to see that young man working with the common laborers and giving himself no rest, just because he says he wants to know exactly 'how the thing is done' and why the old

works failed," she remarked sadly. "When Mr. Windibrook knew he was the son of Judge Masterton and had rich relations, he wished, of course, to be civil, but somehow young Masterton and he didn't 'hit off.' Indeed, Mr. Windibrook was told that he had declared that the prosperity of Cañada City was only a mushroom growth, and it seems too shocking to repeat, dear, but they say he said that the new church — *our* church — was simply using the Almighty as a big bluff to the other towns. Of course, Mr. Windibrook could n't see him after that. Why, he even said your father ought to send you to school somewhere, and not let you grow up in this half civilized place."

Strangely enough, Cissy did not hail this corroboration of her dislike to young Masterton with the liveliness one might have expected. Perhaps it was because Piney Tibbs was no longer present, having left Cissy at the parsonage and returned home. Still she enjoyed her visit after a fashion, romped with the younger Windibrooks and climbed a tree in the security of her sylvan seclusion and the promptings of her still healthy, girlish blood, and only came back to

cake and tea and her new hat, which she had prudently hung up in the summer-house, as the afternoon was waning. When they returned to the house, they found that Mr. Windibrook had gone out with his visitor, and Cissy was spared the advertisement of a boisterous escort home, which he generally insisted upon. She gayly took leave of the infant Windibrook and his mother, sallied out into the empty road, and once more became conscious of her new hat.

The shadows were already lengthening, and a cool breeze stirred the deep aisles of the pines on either side of the highway. One or two people passed her hurriedly, talking and gesticulating, evidently so preoccupied that they did not notice her. Again, a rapid horseman rode by without glancing round, overtook the pedestrians, exchanged a few hurried words with them, and then spurred swiftly away as one of them shouted after him, "There 's another dispatch confirming it." A group of men talking by the roadside failed to look up as she passed. Cissy pouted slightly at this want of taste, which made some late election news or the report of a horse race more enthralling than

her new hat and its owner. Even the toilers in the ditches had left their work, and were congregated around a man who was reading aloud from a widely margined "extra" of the "Cañada City Press." It seemed provoking, as she knew her cheeks were glowing from her romp, and was conscious that she was looking her best. However, the Secamps' cottage was just before her, and the girls were sure to be on the lookout! She shook out her skirts and straightened her pretty little figure as she approached the house. But to her surprise, her coming had evidently been anticipated by them, and they were actually — and unexpectedly — awaiting her behind the low whitewashed garden palings! As she neared them they burst into a shrill, discordant laugh, so full of irony, gratified malice, and mean exaltation that Cissy was for a moment startled. But only for a moment; she had her father's reckless audacity, and bore them down with a display of such pink cheeks and flashing eyes that their laughter was checked, and they remained open-mouthed as she swept by them.

Perhaps this incident prevented her from

noticing another but more passive one. A group of men standing before the new mill — the same men who had so solicitously challenged her attention with their bows a couple of hours ago — turned as she approached and suddenly dispersed. It was not until this was repeated by another group that its oddity forced itself upon her still angry consciousness. Then the street seemed to be full of those excited preoccupied groups who melted away as she advanced. Only one man met her curious eyes, — the engineer, — yet she missed the usual critical smile with which he was wont to greet her, and he gave her a bow of such profound respect and gravity that for the first time she felt really uneasy. Was there something wrong with her hat? That dreadful, fateful hat! Was it too conspicuous? Did he think it was vulgar? She was eager to cross the street on the next block where there were large plate-glass windows which she and Piney — if Piney were only with her now! — had often used as mirrors.

But there was a great crowd on the next block, congregated around the bank, — her father's bank! A vague terror, she knew

not what, now began to creep over her. She would have turned into a side street, but mingled with her fear was a resolution not to show it, — not to even *think* of it, — to combat it as she had combated the horrid laugh of the Secamp girls, and she kept her way with a beating heart but erect head, without looking across the street.

There was another crowd before the newspaper office — also on the other side — and a bulletin board, but she would not try to read it. Only one idea was in her mind, — to reach home before any one should speak to her; for the last intelligible sound that had reached her was the laugh of the Secamp girls, and this was still ringing in her ears, seeming to voice the hidden strangeness of all she saw, and stirring her, as that had, with childish indignation. She kept on with unmoved face, however, and at last turned into the planked side-terrace, — a part of her father's munificence, — and reached the symmetrical garden-beds and graveled walk. She ran up the steps of the veranda and entered the drawing-room through the open French window. Glancing around the familiar room, at her father's closed desk, at

the open piano with the piece of music she had been practicing that morning, the whole walk seemed only a foolish dream that had frightened her. She was Cissy Trixit, the daughter of the richest man in the town! This was her father's house, the wonder of Cañada City!

A ring at the front doorbell startled her; without waiting for the servant to answer it, she stepped out on the veranda, and saw a boy whom she recognized as a waiter at the hotel kept by Piney's father. He was holding a note in his hand, and staring intently at the house and garden. Seeing Cissy, he transferred his stare to her. Snatching the note from him, she tore it open, and read in Piney's well-known scrawl, "Dad won't let me come to you now, dear, but I 'll try to slip out late to-night." Why should she want to come? She had said nothing about coming *now* — and why should her father prevent her? Cissy crushed the note between her fingers, and faced the boy.

"What are you staring at — idiot?"

The boy grinned hysterically, a little frightened at Cissy's straightened brows and snapping eyes.

"Get away! there 's no answer."

The boy ran off, and Cissy returned to the drawing-room. Then it occurred to her that the servant had not answered the bell. She rang again furiously. There was no response. She called down the basement staircase, and heard only the echo of her voice in the depths. How still the house was! Were they *all* out, — Susan, Norah, the cook, the Chinaman, and the gardener? She ran down into the kitchen; the back door was open, the fires were burning, dishes were upon the table, but the kitchen was empty. Upon the floor lay a damp copy of the "extra." She picked it up quickly. Several black headlines stared her in the face. "Enormous Defalcation!" "Montagu Trixit Absconded!" "50,000 Dollars Missing!" "Run on the Bank!"

She threw the paper through the open door as she would have hurled back the accusation from living lips. Then, in a revulsion of feeling lest any one should find her there, she ran upstairs and locked herself in her own room.

So that was what it all meant! All! — from the laugh of the Secamp girls to the

turning away of the townspeople as she went by. Her father was a thief who had stolen money from the bank and run away leaving her alone to bear it! No! It was all a lie — a wicked, jealous lie! A foolish lie, for how could he steal money from *his own* bank? Cissy knew very little of her father — perhaps that was why she believed in him; she knew still less of business, but she knew that *he* did. She had often heard them say it — perhaps the very ones who now called him names. He! who had made Cañada City what it was! *He*, who, Windibrook said, only to-day, had, like Moses, touched the rocks of the Cañada with his magic wand of Finance, and streams of public credit and prosperity had gushed from it! She would never speak to them again! She would shut herself up here, dismiss all the servants but the Chinaman, and wait until her father returned.

There was a knock, and the entreating voice of Norah, the cook, outside the door. Cissy unlocked it and flung it open indignantly.

"Ah! It 's yourself, miss — and I never knew ye kem back till I met that gossoon of

a hotel waiter in the street," said the panting servant. "Sure it was only an hour ago while I was at me woorrck in the kitchen, and Jim rushes in and sez: 'For the love of God, if iver ye want to see a blessed cint of the money ye put in the masther's bank, off wid ye now and draw it out — for there 's a run on the bank!'"

"It was an infamous lie," said Cissy fiercely.

"Sure, miss, how was oi to know? And if the masther *has* gone away, it 's ownly takin' me money from the other divils down there that 's drawin' it out and dividin' it betwixt and between them."

Cissy had a very vague idea of what a "run on the bank" meant, but Norah's logic seemed to satisfy her feminine reason. She softened a little.

"Mr. Windibrook is in the parlor, miss, and a jintleman on the veranda," continued Norah, encouraged.

Cissy started. "I 'll come down," she said briefly.

Mr. Windibrook was waiting beside the piano, with his soft hat in one hand and a large white handkerchief in the other. He

had confidently expected to find Cissy in tears, and was ready with boisterous condolement, but was a little taken aback as the young girl entered with a pale face, straightened brows, and eyes that shone with audacious rebellion. However, it was too late to change his attitude. "Ah, my young friend," he said a little awkwardly, "we must not give way to our emotions, but try to recognize in our trials the benefits of a great lesson. But," he added hurriedly, seeing her stand still silent but erect before him, "I see that you do!" He paused, coughed slightly, cast a glance at the veranda, — where Cissy now for the first time observed a man standing in an obviously assumed attitude of negligent abstraction, — moved towards the back room, and in a lower voice said, "A word with you in private."

Without replying, Cissy followed him.

"If," said Mr. Windibrook, with a sickly smile, "you are questioned regarding your father's affairs, you may remember his peculiar and utterly unsolicited gift of a certain sum towards a new organ, to which I alluded to-day. You can say that he always expressed great liberality towards the church, and it was no surprise to you."

Cissy only stared at him with dangerous eyes.

"Mrs. Windibrook," continued the reverend gentleman in his highest, heartiest voice, albeit a little hurried, "wished me to say to you that until you heard from — your friends — she wanted you to come and stay with her. *Do* come! *Do!*"

Cissy, with her bright eyes fixed upon her visitor, said, "I shall stay here."

"But," said Mr. Windibrook impatiently, "you cannot. That man you see on the veranda is the sheriff's officer. The house and all that it contains are in the hands of the law."

Cissy's face whitened in proportion as her eyes grew darker, but she said stoutly, "I shall stay here till my popper tells me to go."

"Till your popper tells you to go!" repeated Mr. Windibrook harshly, dropping his heartiness and his handkerchief in a burst of unguarded temper. "Your papa is a thief escaping from justice, you foolish girl; a disgraced felon, who dare not show his face again in Cañada City; and you are lucky, yes! lucky, miss, if you do not share his disgrace!"

"And you 're a wicked, wicked liar!" said Cissy, clinching her little fists at her side and edging towards him with a sidelong bantam-like movement as she advanced her freckled cheek close to his with an effrontery so like her absconding father that he recoiled before it. "And a mean, double-faced hypocrite, too! Did n't you always praise him? Did n't you call him a Napoleon, and a — Moses? Did n't you say he was the making of Cañada City? Did n't you get him to raise your salary, and start a subscription for your new house? Oh, you — you — stinking beast!"

Here the stranger on the veranda, still gazing abstractedly at the landscape, gave a low and apparently unconscious murmur, as if enraptured with the view. Mr. Windibrook, recalled to an attempt at dignity, took up his hat and handkerchief. "When you have remembered yourself and your position, Miss Trixit," he said loftily, "the offer I have made you" —

"I despise it! I 'd sooner stay in the woods with the grizzlies and rattlesnakes?" said Cissy pantingly. "Go and leave me alone! Do you hear?" She stamped her little foot. "Are you listening? Go!"

Mr. Windibrook promptly retreated through the door and down the steps into the garden, at which the stranger on the veranda reluctantly tore himself away from the landscape and slowly entered the parlor through the open French window. Here, however, he became equally absorbed and abstracted in the condition of his beard, carefully stroking his shaven cheek and lips and pulling his goatee.

After a pause he turned to the angry Cissy, standing by the piano, radiant with glowing cheeks and flashing eyes, and said slowly, "I reckon you gave the parson as good as he sent. It kinder settles a man to hear the frozen truth about himself sometimes, and you 've helped old Shadbelly considerably on the way towards salvation. But he was right about one thing, Miss Trixit. The house *is* in the hands of the law. I 'm representing it as deputy sheriff. Mebbe you might remember me — Jake Poole — when your father was addressing the last Citizen's meeting, sittin' next to him on the platform — *I* 'm in possession. It is n't a job I 'm hankerin' much arter; I 'd a lief rather hunt hoss thieves or track down road agents

than this kind o' fancy, underhand work. So you 'll excuse me, miss, if I ain't got the style." He paused, rubbed his chin thoughtfully, and then said slowly and with great deliberation: "Ef there 's any little thing here, miss, — any keepsakes or such trifles ez you keer for in partickler, things you would n't like strangers to have, — you just make a little pile of 'em and drop 'em down somewhere outside the back door. There ain't no inventory taken nor sealin' up of anythin' done just yet, though I have to see there ain't anythin' disturbed. But I kalkilate to walk out on that veranda for a spell and look at the landscape." He paused again, and said, with a sigh of satisfaction, "It 's a mighty pooty view out thar; it just takes me every time."

As he turned and walked out through the French window, Cissy did not for a moment comprehend him; then, strangely enough, his act of rude courtesy for the first time awakened her to the full sense of the situation. This house, her father's house, was no longer hers! If her father should *never* return, she wanted nothing from it, *nothing!* She gripped her beating heart with the little

hand she had clinched so valiantly a moment ago. Suddenly her hand dropped. Some one had glided noiselessly into the back room; a figure in a blue blouse; a Chinaman, their house servant, Ah Fe. He cast a furtive glance at the stranger on the veranda, and then beckoned to her stealthily. She came towards him wonderingly, when he suddenly whipped a note from his sleeve, and with a dexterous movement slipped it into her fingers. She tore it open. A single glance showed her a small key inclosed in a line of her father's handwriting. Drawing quickly back into the corner, she read as follows: "If this reaches you in time, take from the second drawer of my desk an envelope marked 'Private Contracts' and give it to the bearer." There was neither signature nor address.

Putting her finger to her lips, she cast a quick glance at the absorbed figure on the veranda and stepped before the desk. She fitted the key to the drawer and opened it rapidly but noiselessly. There lay the envelope, and among other ticketed papers a small roll of greenbacks — such as her father often kept there. It was *his* money;

she did not scruple to take it with the envelope. Handing the latter to the Chinaman, who made it instantly disappear up his sleeve like a conjurer's act, she signed him to follow her into the hall.

"Who gave you that note, Ah Fe?" she whispered breathlessly.

"Chinaman."

"Who gave it to him?"

"Chinaman."

"And to *him?*"

"Nollee Chinaman."

"Another Chinaman?"

"Yes — heap Chinaman — allee same as gang."

"You mean it passed from one Chinaman's hand to another?"

"Allee same."

"Why did n't the first Chinaman who got it bring it here?"

"S'pose Mellikan man want to catchee lettel. He spotty Chinaman. He follee Chinaman. Chinaman passee lettel nex' Chinaman. He no get. Mellikan man no habe got. *Sabe?*"

"Then this package will go back the same way?"

"Allee same."

"And who will *you* give it to now?"

"Allee same man blingee me lettel. Hop Li — who makee washee."

An idea here struck Cissy which made her heart jump and her cheeks flame. Ah Fe gazed at her with an infantile smile of admiration.

"How far did that letter come?" she asked, with eager questioning eyes.

"Lettee me see him," said Ah Fe.

Cissy handed him the missive; he examined closely some half-a-dozen Chinese characters that were scrawled along the length of the outer fold, and which she had innocently supposed were a part of the markings of the rice paper on which the note was written.

"Heap Chinaman velly much walkee — longee way! S'pose you look." He pointed through the open front door to the prospect beyond. It was a familiar one to Cissy, — the long Cañada, the crest on crest of serried pines, and beyond the dim snow-line. Ah Fe's brown finger seemed to linger there.

"In the snow," she whispered, her cheek

whitening like that dim line, but her eyes sparkling like the sunshine over it.

"Allee same, John," said Ah Fe plaintively.

"Ah Fe," whispered Cissy, "take *me* with you to Hop Li."

"No good," said Ah Fe stolidly. "Hop Li, he givee this" — he indicated the envelope in his sleeve — "to next Chinaman. *He* no go. S'pose you go with me, Hop Li — you no makee nothing — allee same, makee foolee!"

"I know; but you just take me there. *Do!*"

The young girl was irresistible. Ah Fe's face relaxed. "Allee litee!" he said, with a resigned smile.

"You wait here a moment," said Cissy, brightening. She flew up the staircase. In a few minutes she was back again. She had exchanged her smart rose-sprigged chintz for a pathetic little blue-checked frock of her school-days; the fateful hat had given way to a brown straw "flat," bent like a frame around her charming face. All the girlishness, and indeed a certain honest boyishness of her nature, seemed to have come out in

her glowing, freckled cheek, brilliant, audacious eyes, and the quick stride which brought her to Ah Fe's side.

"Now let 's go," she said, "out the back way and down the side streets." She paused, cast a glance through the drawing-room at the contemplative figure of the sheriff's deputy on the veranda, and then passed out of the house forever.

. . . . . .

The excitement over the failure of Montagu Trixit's bank did not burn itself out until midnight. By that time, however, it was pretty well known that the amount of the defalcations had been exaggerated; that it had been preceded by the suspension of the "Excelsior Bank" of San Francisco, of which Trixit was also a managing director, occasioned by the discovery of the withdrawal of securities for use in the branch bank at Cañada City; that he had fled the State eastward across the Sierras; yet that, owing to the vigilance of the police on the frontier, he had failed to escape and was in hiding. But there were adverse reports of a more sinister nature. It was said that others were implicated; that they dared not

bring him to justice; it was pointed out that there was more concern among many who were not openly connected with the bank than among its unfortunate depositors. Besides the inevitable downfall of those who had invested their fortunes in it, there was distrust or suspicion everywhere. Even Trixit's enemies were forced to admit the saying that "Cañada City was the bank, and the bank was Trixit."

Perhaps this had something to do with an excited meeting of the directors of the New Mill, to whose discussions Dick Masterton, the engineer, had been hurriedly summoned. When the president told him that he had been selected to undertake the difficult and delicate mission of discovering the whereabouts of Montagu Trixit, and, if possible, procuring an interview with him, he was amazed. What had the New Mill, which had always kept itself aloof from the bank and its methods, to do with the disgraced manager? He was still more astonished when the president added bluntly: —

"Trixit holds securities of ours for money advanced to the mill by himself privately. They do not appear on the books, but if he

chooses to declare them as assets of the bank, it 's a bad thing for us. If he is bold enough to keep them, he may be willing to make some arrangement with us to carry them on. If he has got away or committed suicide, as some say, it 's for you to find the whereabouts of the securities and get them. He is said to have been last seen near the Summit. You understand our position?"

Masterton did, with suppressed disgust. But he was young, and there was the thrill of adventure in this. "I will go," he said quietly.

"We thought you would. You must take the up stage to-night. Come again and get your final instructions. By the way, you might get some information at Trixit's house. You — er — er — are acquainted with his daughter, I think?"

"Which makes it quite impossible for me to seek her for such a purpose," said Masterton coldly.

A few hours later he was on the coach. As they cleared the outskirts of the town, they passed two Chinamen plodding sturdily along in the dust of the highway.

. . . . . .

Mr. Masterton started from a slight doze in the heavy, lumbering "mountain wagon" which had taken the place of the smart Concord coach that he had left at the last station. The scenery, too, had changed; the four horses threaded their way through rocky defiles of stunted larches and hardy "brush," with here and there open patches of shrunken snow. Yet at the edge of declivities he could still see through the rolled-up leather curtains the valley below bathed in autumn, the glistening rivers half spent with the long summer drought, and the green slopes rolling upward into crest after crest of ascending pines. At times a drifting haze, always imperceptible from below, veiled the view; a chill wind blew through the vehicle, and made the steel sledge-runners that hung beneath the wagon, ready to be shipped under the useless wheels, an ominous provision. A few rude "stations," half blacksmith shops, half grocery, marked the deserted but well-worn road; a long, narrow "packer's" wagon, or a tortuous file of Chinamen carrying mysterious bundles depending from bamboo poles, was their rare and only company. The rough sheepskin jackets which these men wore over

their characteristic blue blouses and their heavy leggings were a new revelation to Masterton, accustomed to the thinly clad coolie of the mines. They seemed a distinct race.

"I never knew those chaps get so high up, but they seem to understand the cold," he remarked.

The driver looked up, and ejaculated his disgust and his tobacco juice at the same moment.

"I reckon they 're everywhar in Californy whar you want 'em and whar you don't; you take my word for it, afore long Californy will hev to reckon that she ginerally *don't* want 'em, ef a white man has to live here. With a race tied up together in a language ye can't understand, ways that no feller knows, — from their prayin' to devils, swappin' their wives, and havin' their bones sent back to Chiny, — wot are ye goin' to do, and where are ye? Wot are ye goin' to make outer men that look so much alike ye can't tell 'em apart; that think alike and act alike, and never in ways that ye kin catch on to! Fellers knotted together in some underhand secret way o' communicatin' with each

other, so that ef ye kick a Chinaman up here on the Summit, another Chinaman will squeal in the valley! And the way they do it just gets me! Look yer! I 'll tell ye somethin' that happened, that 's gospel truth! Some of the boys that reckoned to hev some fun with the Chinee gang over at Cedar Camp started out one afternoon to raid 'em. They groped along through the woods whar nobody could see 'em, kalkilatin' to come down with a rush on the camp, over two miles away. And nobody *did* see 'em, only *one* Chinaman wot they met a mile from the camp, burnin' punk to his joss or devil, and he scooted away just in the contrary direction. Well, sir, when they waltzed into that camp, darn my skin! ef there was a Chinaman there, or as much as a grain of rice to grab! Somebody had warned 'em! Well! this sort o' got the boys, and they set about discoverin' how it was done. One of 'em noticed that there was some of them bits of tissue paper slips that they toss around at funerals lyin' along the road near the camp, and another remembered that the Chinaman they met on the hill tossed a lot of that paper in the air afore he scooted. Well, sir, the

wind carried just enough of that paper straight down the hill into that camp ten minutes afore *they* could get there, to give them Chinamen warnin' — whatever it was! Fact! Why, I 've seen 'em stringin' along the road just like them fellers we passed just now, and then stop all of a suddent like hounds off the scent, jabber among themselves, and start off in a different direction" —

"Just what they 're doing now! By thunder!" interrupted another passenger, who was looking through the rolled-up curtain at his side.

All the passengers turned by one accord and looked out. The file of Chinamen under observation had indeed turned, and was even then moving rapidly away at right angles from the road.

"Got some signal, you bet!" said the driver; "some yeller paper or piece o' joss stick in the road. What?"

The remark was addressed to the passenger who had just placed his finger on his lip, and indicated a stolid-looking Chinaman, overlooked before, who was sitting in the back or "steerage" seat.

"Oh, he be darned!" said the driver impatiently. "*He* is no account; he 's only the laundryman from Rocky Cañon. I 'm talkin' of the coolie gang."

But here the conversation flagged, and the air growing keener, the flaps of the leather side curtains were battened down. Masterton gave himself up to conflicting reflections. The information that he had gathered was meagre and unsatisfactory, and he could only trust to luck and circumstance to fulfill his mission. The first glow of adventure having passed, he was uneasily conscious that the mission was not to his taste. The pretty, flushed but defiant face of Cissy that afternoon haunted him; he had not known the immediate cause of it, but made no doubt that she had already heard the news of her father's disgrace when he met her. He regretted now that he had n't spoken to her, if only a few formal words of sympathy. He had always been half tenderly amused at her frank conceit and her "airs," — the innocent, undisguised pride of the country belle, so different from the hard *aplomb* of the city girl! And now the foolish little moth, dan-

cing in the sunshine of prosperity, had felt the chill of winter in its pretty wings. The contempt he had for the father had hitherto shown itself in tolerant pity for the daughter, so proud of her father's position and what it brought her. In the revelation that his own directors had availed themselves of that father's methods, and the ignoble character of his present mission, he felt a stirring of self-reproach. What would become of her? Of course, frivolous as she was, she would not feel the keenness of this misfortune like another, nor yet rise superior to it. She would succumb for the present, to revive another season in a dimmer glory elsewhere. His critical, cynical observation of her had determined that any filial affection she might have would be merged and lost in the greater deprivation of her position.

A sudden darkening of the landscape below, and a singular opaque whitening of the air around them, aroused him from his thoughts. The driver drew up the collar of his overcoat and laid his whip smartly over the backs of his cattle. The air grew gradually darker, until suddenly it seemed to

disintegrate into invisible gritty particles that swept through the wagon. Presently these particles became heavier, more perceptible, and polished like small shot, and a keen wind drove them stingingly into the faces of the passengers, or insidiously into their pockets, collars, or the folds of their clothes. The snow forced itself through the smallest crevice.

"We 'll get over this when once we 've passed the bend; the road seems to dip beyond," said Masterton cheerfully from his seat beside the driver.

The driver gave him a single scornful look, and turned to the passenger who occupied the seat on the other side of him. "I don't like the look o' things down there, but ef we are stuck, we 'll have to strike out for the next station."

"But," said Masterton, as the wind volleyed the sharp snow pellets in their faces and the leaders were scarcely distinguishable through the smoke-like discharges, "it can't be worse than here."

The driver did not speak, but the other passenger craned over his back, and said explanatorily: —

"I reckon ye don't know these storms; this kind o' dry snow don't stick and don't clog. Look!"

Indeed, between the volleys, Masterton could see that the road was perfectly bare and wind-swept, and except slight drifts and banks beside outlying bushes and shrubs, — which even then were again blown away before his eyes, — the level landscape was unclothed and unchanged. Where these mysterious snow pellets went to puzzled and confused him; they seemed to vanish, as they had appeared, into the air about them.

"I'd make a straight rush for the next station," said the other passenger confidently to the driver. "If we're stuck, we're that much on the way; if we turn back now, we'll have to take the grade anyway when the storm's over, and neither you nor I know when *that*'ll be. It may be only a squall just now, but it's gettin' rather late in the season. Just pitch in and drive all ye know."

The driver laid his lash on the horses, and for a few moments the heavy vehicle dashed forward in violent conflict with the storm. At times the elastic hickory framework of

its domed leather roof swayed and bent like the ribs of an umbrella; at times it seemed as if it would be lifted bodily off; at times the whole interior of the vehicle was filled with a thin smoke by drifts through every cranny. But presently, to Masterton's great relief, the interminable level seemed to end, and between the whitened blasts he could see that the road was descending. Again the horses were urged forward, and at last he could feel that the vehicle began to add the momentum of its descent to its conflict with the storm. The blasts grew less violent, or became only the natural resistance of the air to their dominant rush. With the cessation of the snow volleys and the clearing of the atmosphere, the road became more strongly defined as it plunged downward to a terrace on the mountain flank, several hundred feet below. Presently they came again upon a thicker growth of bushes, and here and there a solitary fir. The wind died away; the cold seemed to be less bitter. Masterton, in his relief, glanced smilingly at his companions on the box, but the driver's mouth was compressed as he urged his team forward, and the other passenger looked

hardly less anxious. They were now upon the level terrace, and the storm apparently spending its fury high up and behind them. But in spite of the clearing of the air, he could not but notice that it was singularly dark. What was more singular, the darkness seemed to have risen from below, and to flow in upon them as they descended. A curtain of profound obscurity, darker even than the mountain wall at their side, shut out the horizon and the valley below. But for the temperature, Masterton would have thought a thunderstorm was closing in upon them. An odd feeling of uneasiness crept over him.

A few fitful gusts now came from the obscurity ; one of them was accompanied by what seemed a flight of small startled birds crossing the road ahead of them. A second larger and more sustained flight showed his astonished eyes that they were white, and each bird an enormous flake of *snow !* For an instant the air was filled with these disks, shreds, patches, — two or three clinging together, — like the downfall shaken from a tree, striking the leather roof and sides with a dull thud, spattering the road into which

they descended with large rosettes that melted away only to be followed by hundreds more that stuck and *stayed.* In five minutes the ground was white with it, the long road gleaming out ahead in the darkness; the roof and sides of the wagon were overlaid with it as with a coating of plaster of Paris; the harness of the horses, and even the reins, stood out over their steaming backs like white trappings. In five minutes more the steaming backs themselves were blanketed with it; the arms and legs of the outside passengers pinioned to the seats with it, and the arms of the driver kept free only by incessant motion. It was no longer snowing; it was "snowballing;" it was an avalanche out of the slopes of the sky. The exhausted horses floundered in it; the clogging wheels dragged in it; the vehicle at last plunged into a billow of it — and stopped.

The bewildered and half blinded passengers hurried out into the road to assist the driver to unship the wheels and fit the steel runners in their axles. But it was too late! By the time the heavy wagon was converted into a sledge, it was deeply imbedded in wet

and clinging snow. The narrow, long-handled shovels borrowed from the prospectors' kits were powerless before this heavy, half liquid impediment. At last the driver, with an oath, relinquished the attempt, and, unhitching his horses, collected the passengers and led them forward by a narrower and more sheltered trail toward the next station, now scarce a mile away. The led horses broke a path before them, the snow fell less heavily, but it was nearly an hour before the straggling procession reached the house, and the snow-coated and exhausted passengers huddled and steamed round the red-hot stove in the bar-room. The driver had vanished with his team into the shed; Masterton's fellow passenger on the box-seat, after a few whispered words to the landlord, also disappeared.

"I see you 've got Jake Poole with you," said one of the bar-room loungers to Masterton, indicating the passenger who had just left. "I reckon he 's here on the same fool business."

Masterton looked his surprise and mystification.

"Jake Poole, the deputy sheriff," re-

peated the other. "I reckon he's here pretendin' to hunt for Montagu Trixit like the San Francisco detectives that kem up yesterday."

Masterton with difficulty repressed a start. He had heard of Poole, but did not know him by sight. "I don't think I understand," he said coolly.

"I reckon you're a stranger in these parts," returned the lounger, looking at Masterton curiously. "Ef you warn't, ye'd know that about the last man San Francisco or Cañada City *wanted* to ketch is Monty Trixit! He knows too much and *they* know it. But they've got to keep up a show chase — a kind o' cirkis-ridin' — up here to satisfy the stockholders. You bet that Jake Poole hez got his orders — they might kill him to shut his mouth, ef they got an excuse — and he made a fight — but he ain't no such fool. No, sir! Why, the sickest man you ever saw was that director that kem up here with a detective when he found that Monty *had n't* left the State."

"Then he *is* hiding about here?" said Masterton, with assumed calmness.

The man paused, lowered his voice, and

said: "I would n't swear he was n't a mile from whar we 're talkin' now. Why, they do allow that he 's taken a drink at this very bar *since* the news came! — and that thar 's a hoss kept handy in the stable already saddled just to tempt him ef he was inclined to scoot."

"That 's only a bluff to start him goin' so that they kin shoot him in his tracks," said a bystander.

"That ain't no good ef he has, as they *say* he has, papers stowed away with a friend that would frighten some mighty partickler men out o' their boots," returned the first speaker. "But he 's got his spies too, and thar ain't a man that crosses the Divide as ain't spotted by them. The officers brag about havin' put a cordon around the district, and yet they 've just found out that he managed to send a telegraphic dispatch from Black Rock station right under their noses. Why, only an hour or so arter the detectives and the news arrived here, thar kem along one o' them emigrant teams from Pike, and the driver said that a smart-lookin' chap in store-clothes had come out of an old prospector's cabin up thar on the rise

about a mile away and asked for a newspaper. And the description the teamster gave just fitted Trixit to a T. Well, the information was give so public like that the detectives *had* to make a rush over thar, and b' gosh! although thar was n't a soul passed them but a file of Chinese coolies, when they got thar they found *nothin'*, — nothin' but them Chinamen cookin' their rice by the roadside."

Masterton smiled carelessly, and walked to the window, as if intent upon the still falling snow. But he had at once grasped the situation that seemed now almost providential for his inexperience and his mission. The man he was seeking was within his possible reach, if the story he had heard was true. The detectives would not be likely to interfere with his plans, for he was the only man who really wished to meet the fugitive. The presence of Poole made him uneasy, though he had never met the man before. Was it barely possible that he was on the same mission on behalf of others? *If* what he heard was true, there might be others equally involved with the absconding manager. But then the spies — how could the

deputy sheriff elude them, and how could *he?*

He was turning impatiently away from the window when his eye caught sight of a straggling file of Chinamen breasting the storm on their way up the hill. A sudden idea seized him. Perhaps *they* were the spies in question. He remembered the driver's story. A sudden flash of intuition made him now understand the singular way the file of coolies which they met had diverted their course after passing the wagon. They had recognized the deputy on the box. Stay! — there was another Chinaman in the coach; *he* might have given them the signal. He glanced hurriedly around the room for him; he was gone. Perhaps he had already joined the file he had just seen. His only hope was to follow them — but how? and how to do it quietly? The afternoon was waning; it would be three or four hours before the down coach would arrive, from which the driver expected assistance. Now, if ever, was his opportunity.

He made his way through the back door, and found himself among the straw and chips of the stable-yard and woodshed. Still un-

certain what to do, he mechanically passed before the long shed which served as temporary stalls for the steaming wagon horses. At the further end, to his surprise, was a tethered mustang ready saddled and bridled — the opportune horse left for the fugitive, according to the lounger's story. Masterton cast a quick glance around the stable; it was deserted by all save the feeding animals.

He was new to adventures of this kind, or he would probably have weighed the possibilities and consequences. He was ordinarily a thoughtful, reflective man, but like most men of intellect, he was also imaginative and superstitious, and this crowning accident of the providential situation in which he found himself was superior to his logic. There would also be a grim irony in his taking this horse for such a purpose. He again looked and listened. There was no one within sight or hearing. He untied the rope from the bit-ring, leaped into the saddle, and emerged cautiously from the shed. The wet snow muffled the sound of the horse's hoofs. Moving round to the rear of the stable so as to bring it between himself

and the station, he clapped his heels into the mustang's flanks and dashed into the open.

At first he was confused and bewildered by the half hidden boulders and snow-shrouded bushes that beset the broken ground, and dazzled by the still driving storm. But he knew that they would also divert attention from his flight, and beyond, he could now see a white slope slowly rising before him, near whose crest a few dark spots were crawling in file, like Alpine climbers. They were the Chinamen he was seeking. He had reasoned that when they discovered they were followed they would, in the absence of any chance of signaling through the storm, detach one of their number to give the alarm. *Him* he would follow. He felt his revolver safe on his hip; he would use it only if necessary to intimidate the spies.

For some moments his ascent through the wet snow was slow and difficult, but as he advanced, he felt a change of temperature corresponding to that he had experienced that afternoon on the wagon coming down. The air grew keener, the snow drier and

finer. He kept a sharp lookout for the moving figures, and scanned the horizon for some indication of the prospector's deserted hut. Suddenly the line of figures he was watching seemed to be broken, and then gathered together as a group. Had they detected him? Evidently they had, for, as he had expected, one of them had been detached, and was now moving at right angles from the party towards the right. With a thrill of excitement he urged his horse forward; the group was far to the left, and he was nearing the solitary figure. But to his astonishment, as he approached the top of the slope he now observed another figure, as far to the left of the group as he was to the right, and that figure he could see, even at that distance, was *not* a Chinaman. He halted for a better observation; for an instant he thought it might be the fugitive himself, but as quickly he recognized it was another man — the deputy. It was *he* whom the Chinaman had discovered; it was *he* who had caused the diversion and the dispatch of the vedette to warn the fugitive. His own figure had evidently not yet been detected. His heart beat high with hope;

he again dashed forward after the flying messenger, who was undoubtedly seeking the prospector's ruined hut and — Trixit.

But it was no easy matter. At this elevation the snow had formed a crust, over which the single Chinaman — a lithe young figure — skimmed like a skater, while Masterton's horse crashed through it into unexpected depths. Again, the runner could deviate by a shorter cut, while the horseman was condemned to the one half obliterated trail. The only thing in Masterton's favor, however, was that he was steadily increasing his distance from the group and the deputy sheriff, and so cutting off their connection with the messenger. But the trail grew more and more indistinct as it neared the summit, until at last it utterly vanished. Still he kept up his speed toward the active little figure — which now seemed to be that of a mere boy — skimming over the frozen snow. Twice a stumble and flounder of the mustang through the broken crust ought to have warned him of his recklessness, but now a distinct glimpse of a low, blackened shanty, the prospector's ruined hut, toward which the messenger was making, made him

forget all else. The distance was lessening between them; he could see the long pigtail of the fugitive standing out from his bent head, when suddenly his horse plunged forward and downward. In an awful instant of suspense and twilight, such as he might have seen in a dream, he felt himself pitched headlong into suffocating depths, followed by a shock, the crushing weight and steaming flank of his horse across his shoulder, utter darkness, and — merciful unconsciousness.

How long he lay there thus he never knew. With his returning consciousness came this strange twilight again, — the twilight of a dream. He was sitting in the new church at Cañada City, as he had sat the first Sunday of his arrival there, gazing at the pretty face of Cissy Trixit in the pew opposite him, and wondering who she was. Again he saw the startled, awakened light that came into her adorable eyes, the faint blush that suffused her cheek as she met his inquiring gaze, and the conscious, half conceited, half girlish toss of her little head as she turned her eyes away, and then a file of brown Chinamen, muttering some

harsh, uncouth gibberish, interposed between them. This was followed by what seemed to be the crashing in of the church roof, a stifling heat succeeded by a long, deadly chill. But he knew that *this* last was all a dream, and he tried to struggle to his feet to see Cissy's face again, — a reality that he felt would take him out of this horrible trance, — and he called to her across the pew and heard her sweet voice again in answer, and then a wave of unconsciousness once more submerged him.

He came back to life with a sharp tingling of his whole frame as if pierced with a thousand needles. He knew he was being rubbed, and in his attempts to throw his torturers aside, he saw faintly by the light of a flickering fire that they were Chinamen, and he was lying on the floor of a rude hut. With his first movements they ceased, and, wrapping him like a mummy in warm blankets, dragged him out of the heap of loose snow with which they had been rubbing him, toward the fire that glowed upon the large adobe hearth. The stinging pain was succeeded by a warm glow; a pleasant languor, which made even thought a burden,

came over him, and yet his perceptions were keenly alive to his surroundings. He heard the Chinamen mutter something and then depart, leaving him alone. But presently he was aware of another figure that had entered, and was now sitting with its back to him at a rude table, roughly extemporized from a packing-box, apparently engaged in writing. It was a small Chinaman, evidently the one he had chased! The events of the past few hours — his mission, his intentions, and every incident of the pursuit — flashed back upon him. Where was he? What was he doing here? Had Trixit escaped him?

In his exhausted state he was unable to formulate a question which even then he doubted if the Chinaman could understand. So he simply watched him lazily, and with a certain kind of fascination, until he should finish his writing and turn round. His long pigtail, which seemed ridiculously disproportionate to his size, — the pigtail which he remembered had streamed into the air in his flight, — had partly escaped from the dish-covered hat under which it had been coiled. But what was singular, it was not the wiry

black pigtail of his Mongolian fellows, but soft and silky, and as the firelight played upon it, it seemed of a shining chestnut brown! It was like — like — he stopped — was he dreaming again? A long sigh escaped him.

The figure instantly turned. He started. It was Cissy Trixit! There was no mistaking that charming, sensitive face, glowing with health and excitement, albeit showing here and there the mark of the pigment with which it had been stained, now hurriedly washed off. A little of it had run into the corners of her eyelids, and enhanced the brilliancy of her eyes.

He found his tongue with an effort. "What are you doing here?" he asked with a faint voice, and a fainter attempt to smile.

"That 's what I might ask about you," she said pertly, but with a slight touch of scorn; "but I guess I know as well as I do about the others. I came here to see my father," she added defiantly.

"And you are the — the — one — I chased?"

"Yes; and I 'd have outrun you easily, even with your horse to help you," she said

proudly, "only I turned back when you went down into that prospector's hole with your horse and his broken neck atop of you."

He groaned slightly, but more from shame than pain. The young girl took up a glass of whiskey ready on the table and brought it to him. "Take that; it will fetch you all right in a moment. Popper says no bones are broken."

Masterton waived the proffered glass. "Your father — is he here?" he asked hurriedly, recalling his mission.

"Not now; he 's gone to the station — to — fetch — my clothes," she said, with a little laugh.

"To the station?" repeated Masterton, bewildered.

"Yes," she replied, "to the station. Of course you don't know the news," she added, with an air of girlish importance. "They 've stopped all proceedings against him, and he 's as free as you are."

Masterton tried to rise, but another groan escaped him. He was really in pain. Cissy's bright eyes softened. She knelt beside him, her soft breath fanning his hair, and lifted him gently to a sitting position.

"Oh, I've done it before," she laughed, as she read his wonder, with his gratitude, in his eyes. "The horse was already stiff, and you were nearly so, by the time I came up to you and got" — she laughed again — "the *other* Chinaman to help me pull you out of that hole."

"I know I owe you my life," he said, his face flushing.

"It was lucky I was there," she returned naïvely; "perhaps lucky you were chasing me."

"I 'm afraid that of the many who would run after you I should be the least lucky," he said, with an attempt to laugh that did not, however, conceal his mortification; "but I assure you that I only wished to have an interview with your father, — a *business* interview, perhaps as much in his interest as my own."

The old look of audacity came back to her face. "I guess that 's what they all came here for, except one, but it did n't keep them from believing and saying he was a thief behind his back. Yet they all wanted his — confidence," she added bitterly.

Masterton felt that his burning cheeks

were confessing the truth of this. "You excepted one," he said hesitatingly.

"Yes — the deputy sheriff. He came to help *me*."

"You!"

"Yes, *me!*" A coquettish little toss of her head added to his confusion. "He threw up his job just to follow me, without my knowing it, to see that I did n't come to any harm. He saw me only once, too, at the house when he came to take possession. He said he thought I was 'clear grit' to risk everything to find father, and he said he saw it in me when he was there; that 's how he guessed where I was gone when I ran away, and followed me."

"He was as right as he was lucky," said Masterton gravely. "But how did you get here?"

She slipped down on the floor beside him with an unconscious movement that her masculine garments only made the more quaintly girlish, and, clasping her knee with both hands, looked at the fire as she rocked herself slightly backward and forward as she spoke.

"It will shock a proper man like you, I

know," she began demurely, "but I came *alone*, with only a Chinaman to guide me. I got these clothes from our laundryman, so that I should n't attract attention. I would have got a Chinese lady's dress, but I could n't walk in *their* shoes," — she looked down at her little feet encased in wooden sandals, — "and I had a long way to walk. But even if I did n't look quite right to Chinamen, no white man was able to detect the difference. You passed me twice in the stage, and you did n't know me. I traveled night and day, most of the time walking, and being passed along from one Chinaman to another, or, when we were alone, being slung on a pole between two coolies like a bale of goods. I ate what they could give me, for I dared not go into a shop or a restaurant; I could n't shut my eyes in their dens, so I stayed awake all night. Yet I got ahead of you and the sheriff, — though I did n't know at the time what *you* were after," she added presently.

He was overcome with wondering admiration of her courage, and of self-reproach at his own short-sightedness. This was the girl he had looked upon as a spoiled village

beauty, satisfied with her small triumphs and provincial elevation, and vacant of all other purpose. Here was she — the all-unconscious heroine — and he her critic helpless at her feet! It was not a cheerful reflection, and yet he took a certain delight in his expiation. Perhaps he had half believed in her without knowing it. What could he do or say? I regret to say he dodged the question meanly.

"And you think your disguise escaped detection?" he said, looking markedly at her escaped braid of hair.

She followed his eyes rather than his words, half pettishly caught up the loosened braid, swiftly coiled it around the top of her head, and, clapping the weather-beaten and battered conical hat back again upon it, defiantly said: "Yes! Everybody is n't as critical as you are, and even you would n't be — of a Chinaman!"

He had never seen her except when she was arrayed with the full intention to affect the beholders and perfectly conscious of her attractions; he was utterly unprepared for this complete ignoring of adornment now, albeit he was for the first time aware how

her real prettiness made it unnecessary. She looked fully as charming in this grotesque head-covering as she had in that paragon of fashion, the new hat, which had excited his tolerant amusement.

"I 'm afraid I 'm a very poor critic," he said bluntly. "I never conceived that this sort of thing was at all to your taste."

"I came to see my father because I wanted to," she said, with equal bluntness.

"And I came to see him though I *did n't* want to," he said, with a cynical laugh.

She turned, and fixed her brown eyes inquiringly upon him.

"Why did you come, then?"

"I was ordered by my directors."

"Then you did not believe he was a thief?" she asked, her eyes softening.

"It would ill become me to accuse your father — or my directors," he answered diplomatically.

She was quick enough to detect the suggestion of moral superiority in his tone, but woman enough to forgive it. "You 're no friend of Windibrook," she said, "I know."

"I am not," he replied frankly.

"If you would like to see my popper,

I can manage it," she said hesitatingly. "He 'll do anything for me," she added, with a touch of her old pride.

"Who could blame him?" returned Masterton gravely. "But if he is a free man now, and able to go where he likes, and to see whom he likes, he may not care to give an audience to a mere messenger."

"You wait and let me see him first," said the girl quickly. Then, as the sound of sleigh-bells came from the road outside, she added, "Here he is. I 'll get your clothes; they are out here drying by the fire in the shed." She disappeared through a back door, and returned presently bearing his dried garments. "Dress yourself while I take popper into the shed," she said quickly, and ran out into the road.

Masterton dressed himself with difficulty. Although circulation was now restored, and he felt a glow through his warmed clothes, he had been sorely bruised and shaken by his fall. He had scarcely finished dressing when Montagu Trixit entered from the shed. Masterton looked at him with a new interest and a respect he had never felt before. There certainly was little of the daughter in

this keen-faced, resolute-lipped man, though his brown eyes, like hers, had the same frank, steadfast audacity. With a business brevity that was hurried but not unkindly, he hoped Masterton had fully recovered.

"Thanks to your daughter, I 'm all right now," said Masterton. "I need not tell you that I believe I owe my life to her energy and courage, for I think you have experienced what she can do in that way. But *you* have had the advantage of those who have only enjoyed her social acquaintance in knowing all the time what she was capable of," he added significantly.

"She is a good girl," said Trixit briefly, yet with a slight rise in color on his dark, sallow cheek, and a sudden wavering of his steadfast eyes. "She tells me you have a message from your directors. I think I know what it is, but we won't discuss it now. As I am going directly to Sacramento, I shall not see them, but I will give you an answer to take to them when we reach the station. I am going to give you a lift there when my daughter is ready. And here she is."

It was the old Cissy that stepped into the room, dressed as she was when she left

her father's house two days before. Oddly enough, he fancied that something of her old conscious manner had returned with her clothes, and as he stepped with her into the back seat of the covered sleigh in waiting, he could not help saying, "I really think I understand you better in your other clothes."

A slight blush mounted to Cissy's cheek, but her eyes were still audacious. "All the same, I don't think you 'd like to walk down Main Street with me in that rig, although you once thought nothing of taking me over your old mill in your blue blouse and overalls." And having apparently greatly relieved her proud little heart by this enigmatic statement, she grew so chatty and confidential that the young man was satisfied that he had been in love with her from the first!

When they reached the station, Trixit drew him aside. Taking an envelope marked "Private Contracts" from his pocket, he opened it and displayed some papers. "These are the securities. Tell your directors that you have seen them safe in my hands, and that no one else has seen them. Tell them that if they will send me their renewed notes, dated from to-day, to Sacramento within the

next three days, I will return the securities. That is my message."

The young man bowed. But before the coach started he managed to draw near to Cissy. "You are not returning to Cañada City," he said.

The young girl made a gesture of indignation. "No! I am never going there again. I go with my popper to Sacramento."

"Then I suppose I must say 'good-by.'"

The girl looked at him in surprise. "Popper says you are coming to Sacramento in three days!"

"Am I?"

He looked at her fixedly. She returned his glance audaciously, steadfastly.

"You are," she said, in her low but distinct voice.

"I will."

And he did.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE FONDA

PART I

"WELL!" said the editor of the "Mountain Clarion," looking up impatiently from his copy. "What 's the matter now?"

The intruder in his sanctum was his foreman. He was also acting as pressman, as might be seen from his shirt-sleeves spattered with ink, rolled up over the arm that had just been working "the Archimedian lever that moves the world," which was the editor's favorite allusion to the hand-press that strict economy obliged the "Clarion" to use. His braces, slipped from his shoulders during his work, were looped negligently on either side, their functions being replaced by one hand, which occasionally hitched up his trousers to a securer position. A pair of down-at-heel slippers — dear to the country printer — completed his negligée.

But the editor knew that the ink-spattered

arm was sinewy and ready, that a stout and loyal heart beat under the soiled shirt, and that the slipshod slippers did not prevent its owner's foot from being "put down" very firmly on occasion. He accordingly met the shrewd, good-humored blue eyes of his faithful henchman with an interrogating smile.

"I won't keep you long," said the foreman, glancing at the editor's copy with his habitual half humorous toleration of that work, it being his general conviction that news and advertisements were the only valuable features of a newspaper; "I only wanted to talk to you a minute about makin' suthin more o' this yer accident to Colonel Starbottle."

"Well, we've a full report of it in, haven't we?" said the editor wonderingly. "I have even made an editorial para. about the frequency of these accidents, and called attention to the danger of riding those half broken Spanish mustangs."

"Yes, ye did that," said the foreman tolerantly; "but ye see, thar's some folks around here that allow it warn't no accident. There's a heap of them believe that

no runaway hoss ever mauled the colonel ez *he* got mauled."

"But I heard it from the colonel's own lips," said the editor, "and *he* surely ought to know."

"He mout know and he mout n't, and if he *did* know, he would n't tell," said the foreman musingly, rubbing his chin with the cleaner side of his arm. "Ye did n't see him when he was picked up, did ye?"

"No," said the editor. "Only after the doctor had attended him. Why?"

"Jake Parmlee, ez picked him up outer the ditch, says that he was half choked, and his black silk neck-handkercher was pulled tight around his throat. There was a mark on his nose ez ef some one had tried to gouge out his eye, and his left ear was chawed ez ef he 'd bin down in a reg'lar rough-and-tumble clinch."

"He told me his horse bolted, buck-jumped, threw him, and he lost consciousness," said the editor positively. "He had no reason for lying, and a man like Starbottle, who carries a Derringer and is a dead shot, would have left his mark on somebody if he 'd been attacked."

"That 's what the boys say is just the reason why he lied. He was *took suddent*, don't ye see, — he'd no show — and don't like to confess it. See? A man like *him* ain't goin' to advertise that he kin be tackled and left senseless and no one else got hurt by it! His political influence would be ruined here!"

The editor was momentarily staggered at this large truth.

"Nonsense!" he said, with a laugh. "Who would attack Colonel Starbottle in that fashion? He might have been shot on sight by some political enemy with whom he had quarreled — but not *beaten*."

"S'pose it warn't no political enemy?" said the foreman doggedly.

"Then who else could it be?" demanded the editor impatiently.

"That 's jest for the press to find out and expose," returned the foreman, with a significant glance at the editor's desk. "I reckon that 's whar the 'Clarion' ought to come in."

"In a matter of this kind," said the editor promptly, "the paper has no business to interfere with a man's statement. The

colonel has a perfect right to his own secret — if there is one, which I very much doubt. But," he added, in laughing recognition of the half reproachful, half humorous discontent on the foreman's face, "what dreadful theory have *you* and the boys got about it — and what do *you* expect to expose?"

"Well," said the foreman very seriously, "it 's jest this: You see, the colonel is mighty sweet on that Spanish woman Ramierez up on the hill yonder. It was her mustang he was ridin' when the row happened near her house."

"Well?" said the editor, with disconcerting placidity.

"Well," — hesitated the foreman, "you see, they 're a bad lot, those Greasers, especially the Ramierez, her husband."

The editor knew that the foreman was only echoing the provincial prejudice against this race, which he himself had always combated. Ramierez kept a fonda or hostelry on a small estate, — the last of many leagues formerly owned by the Spanish grantee, his landlord, — and had a wife of some small coquetries and redundant charms. Gambling took place at the fonda, and it was

said the common prejudice against the Mexican did not, however, prevent the American from trying to win his money.

"Then you think Ramierez was jealous of the colonel? But in that case he would have knifed him, — Spanish fashion, — and not without a struggle."

"There 's more ways they have o' killin' a man than that; he might hev been dragged off his horse by a lasso and choked," said the foreman darkly.

The editor had heard of this vaquero method of putting an enemy *hors de combat;* but it was a clumsy performance for the public road, and the brutality of its manner would have justified the colonel in exposing it.

The foreman saw the incredulity expressed in his face, and said somewhat aggressively, "Of course I know ye don't take no stock in what 's said agin the Greasers, and that 's what the boys know, and what they said, and that 's the reason why I thought I oughter tell ye, so that ye might n't seem to be always favorin' 'em."

The editor's face darkened slightly, but he kept his temper and his good humor.

"So that to prove that the 'Clarion' is unbiased where the Mexicans are concerned, I ought to make it their only accuser, and cast a doubt on the American's veracity?" he said, with a smile.

"I don't mean that," said the foreman, reddening. "Only I thought ye might — as ye understand these folks' ways — ye might be able to get at them easy, and mebbe make some copy outer the blamed thing. It would just make a stir here, and be a big boom for the 'Clarion.'"

"I 've no doubt it would," said the editor dryly. "However, I 'll make some inquiries; but you might as well let 'the boys' know that the 'Clarion' will not publish the colonel's secret without his permission. Meanwhile," he continued, smiling, "if you are very anxious to add the functions of a reporter to your other duties and bring me any discoveries you may make, I 'll — look over your copy."

He good humoredly nodded, and took up his pen again, — a hint at which the embarrassed foreman, under cover of hitching up his trousers, awkwardly and reluctantly withdrew.

It was with some natural youthful curiosity, but no lack of loyalty to Colonel Starbottle, that the editor that evening sought this "war-horse of the Democracy," as he was familiarly known, in his invalid chamber at the Palmetto Hotel. He found the hero with a bandaged ear and — perhaps it was fancy suggested by the story of the choking — cheeks more than usually suffused and apoplectic. Nevertheless, he was seated by the table with a mint julep before him, and welcomed the editor by instantly ordering another.

The editor was glad to find him so much better.

"Gad, sir, no bones broken, but a good deal of 'possum scratching about the head for such a little throw like that. I must have slid a yard or two on my left ear before I brought up."

"You were unconscious from the fall, I believe."

"Only for an instant, sir — a single instant! I recovered myself with the assistance of a No'the'n gentleman — a Mr. Parmlee — who was passing."

"Then you think your injuries were entirely due to your fall?"

The colonel paused with the mint julep halfway to his lips, and set it down. "Sir!" he ejaculated, with astounded indignation.

"You say you were unconscious," returned the editor lightly, "and some of your friends think the injuries inconsistent with what you believe to be the cause. They are concerned lest you were unknowingly the victim of some foul play."

"Unknowingly! Sir! Do you take me for a chuckle-headed niggah, that I don't know when I'm thrown from a buck-jumping mustang? or do they think I'm a Chinaman to be hustled and beaten by a gang of bullies? Do they know, sir, that the account I have given I am responsible for, sir? — personally responsible?"

There was no doubt to the editor that the colonel was perfectly serious, and that the indignation arose from no guilty consciousness of a secret. A man as peppery as the colonel would have been equally alert in defense.

"They feared that you might have been ill used by some evilly disposed person during your unconsciousness," explained the editor diplomatically; "but as you say *that* was

only for a moment, and that you were aware of everything that happened" — He paused.

"Perfectly, sir! Perfectly! As plain as I see this julep before me. I had just left the Ramierez rancho. The señora, — a devilish pretty woman, sir, — after a little playful badinage, had offered to lend me her daughter's mustang if I could ride it home. You know what it is, Mr. Grey," he said gallantly. "I 'm an older man than you, sir, but a challenge from a d—d fascinating creature, I trust, sir, I am not yet old enough to decline. Gad, sir, I mounted the brute. I 've ridden Morgan stock and Blue Grass thoroughbreds bareback, sir, but I 've never thrown my leg over such a blanked Chinese cracker before. After he bolted I held my own fairly, but he buck-jumped before I could lock my spurs under him, and the second jump landed me!"

"How far from the Ramierez fonda were you when you were thrown?"

"A matter of four or five hundred yards, sir."

"Then your accident might have been seen from the fonda?"

"Scarcely, sir. For in that case, I may

say, without vanity, that — er — the — er señora would have come to my assistance."

"But not her husband?"

The old-fashioned shirt-frill which the colonel habitually wore grew erectile with a swelling indignation, possibly half assumed to conceal a certain conscious satisfaction beneath. "Mr. Grey," he said, with pained severity, "as a personal friend of mine, and a representative of the press, — a power which I respect, — I overlook a disparaging reflection upon a lady, which I can only attribute to the levity of youth and thoughtlessness. At the same time, sir," he added, with illogical sequence, "if Ramierez felt aggrieved at my attentions, he knew where I could be found, sir, and that it was not my habit to decline giving gentlemen — of any nationality — satisfaction — sir! — personal satisfaction."

He paused, and then added, with a singular blending of anxiety and a certain natural dignity, "I trust, sir, that nothing of this — er — kind will appear in your paper."

"It was to keep it out by learning the truth from you, my dear colonel," said the editor lightly, "that I called to-day. Why,

it was even suggested," he added, with a laugh, "that you were half strangled by a lasso."

To his surprise the colonel did not join in the laugh, but brought his hand to his loose cravat with an uneasy gesture and a somewhat disturbed face.

"I admit, sir," he said, with a forced smile, "that I experienced a certain sensation of choking, and I may have mentioned it to Mr. Parmlee; but it was due, I believe, sir, to my cravat, which I always wear loosely, as you perceive, becoming twisted in my fall, and in rolling over."

He extended his fat white hand to the editor, who shook it cordially, and then withdrew. Nevertheless, although perfectly satisfied with his mission, and firmly resolved to prevent any further discussion on the subject, Mr. Grey's curiosity was not wholly appeased. What were the relations of the colonel with the Ramierez family? From what he himself had said, the theory of the foreman as to the motives of the attack might have been possible, and the assault itself committed while the colonel was unconscious.

Mr. Grey, however, kept this to himself, briefly told his foreman that he found no reason to add to the account already in type, and dismissed the subject from his mind. The colonel left the town the next day.

One morning a week afterward, the foreman entered the sanctum cautiously, and, closing the door of the composing-room behind him, stood for a moment before the editor with a singular combination of irresolution, shamefacedness, and humorous discomfiture in his face.

Answering the editor's look of inquiry, he began slowly, "Mebbe ye remember when we was talkin' last week o' Colonel Starbottle's accident, I sorter allowed that he knew all the time *why* he was attacked that way, only he would n't tell."

"Yes, I remember you were incredulous," said the editor, smiling.

"Well, I take it all back! I reckon he told all he knew. I was wrong! I cave!"

"Why?" asked the editor wonderingly.

"Well, I have been through the mill myself!"

He unbuttoned his shirt collar, pointed to his neck, which showed a slight abrasion and

a small livid mark of strangulation at the throat, and added, with a grim smile, "And I 've got about as much proof as I want."

The editor put down his pen and stared at him.

"You see, Mr. Grey, it was partly your fault! When you bedeviled me about gettin' that news, and allowed I might try my hand at reportin', I was fool enough to take up the challenge. So once or twice, when I was off duty here, I hung around the Ramierez shanty. Once I went in thar when they were gamblin'; thar war one or two Americans thar that war winnin' as far as I could see, and was pretty full o' that aguardiente that they sell thar — that kills at forty rods. You see, I had a kind o' suspicion that ef thar was any foul play goin' on it might be worked on these fellers *arter* they were drunk, and war goin' home with thar winnin's."

"So you gave up your theory of the colonel being attacked from jealousy?" said the editor, smiling.

"Hol' on! I ain't through yet! I only reckoned that ef thar was a gang of roughs kept thar on the premises they might be used for that purpose, and I only wanted to ketch

'em at thar work. So I jest meandered into the road when they war about comin' out, and kept my eye skinned for what might happen. Thar was a kind o' corral about a hundred yards down the road, half adobe wall, and a stockade o' palin's on top of it, about six feet high. Some of the palin's were off, and I peeped through, but thar warn't nobody thar. I stood thar, alongside the bank, leanin' my back agin one o' them openin's, and jest watched and waited.

"All of a suddent I felt myself grabbed by my coat collar behind, and my neck-handkercher and collar drawn tight around my throat till I could n't breathe. The more I twisted round, the tighter the clinch seemed to get. I could n't holler nor speak, but thar I stood with my mouth open, pinned back agin that cursed stockade, and my arms and legs movin' up and down, like one o' them dancin' jacks! It seems funny, Mr. Grey — I reckon I looked like a darned fool — but I don't wanter feel ag'in as I did jest then. The clinch o' my throat got tighter; everything got black about me; I was jest goin' off and kalkilatin' it was about time for you to advertise for another foreman, when suthin broke — fetched away!

"It was my collar button, and I dropped like a shot. It was a minute before I could get my breath ag'in, and when I did and managed to climb that darned stockade, and drop on the other side, thar warn't a soul to be seen! A few hosses that stampeded in my gettin' over the fence war all that was there! I was mighty shook up, you bet! — and to make the hull thing perfectly ridic'lous, when I got back to the road, after all I 'd got through, darn my skin, ef thar warn 't that pesky lot o' drunken men staggerin' along, jinglin' the scads they had won, and enjoyin' themselves, and nobody a-followin' 'em! I jined 'em jest for kempany's sake, till we got back to town, but nothin' happened."

"But, my dear Richards," said the editor warmly, "this is no longer a matter of mere reporting, but of business for the police. You must see the deputy sheriff at once, and bring your complaint — or shall I? It 's no joking matter."

"Hol' on, Mr. Grey," replied Richards slowly. "I 've told this to nobody but you — nor am I goin' to — *sabe?* It 's an affair of my own — and I reckon I kin take care of it without goin' to the Revised Statutes of

the State of California, or callin' out the sheriff's posse."

His humorous blue eyes just then had certain steely points in them like glittering facets as he turned them away, which the editor had seen before on momentous occasions, and he was speaking slowly and composedly, which the editor also knew boded no good to an adversary.

"Don't be a fool, Richards," he said quietly. "Don't take as a personal affront what was a common, vulgar crime. You would undoubtedly have been robbed by that rascal had not the others come along."

Richards shook his head. "I might hev bin robbed a dozen times afore *they* came along — ef that was the little game. No, Mr. Grey, — it warn't no robbery."

"Had you been paying court to the Señora Ramierez, like Colonel Starbottle?" asked the editor, with a smile.

"Not much," returned Richards scornfully; "she ain't my style. But" — he hesitated, and then added, "thar was a mighty purty gal thar — and her darter, I reckon — a reg'lar pink fairy! She kem in only a minute, and they sorter hustled her out

ag'in — for darn my skin ef she did n't look as much out o' place in that smoky old garlic-smellin' room as an angel at a bull-fight. And what got me — she was ez white ez you or me, with blue eyes, and a lot o' dark reddish hair in a long braid down her back. Why, only for her purty sing-song voice and her '*Gracias, señor*,' you 'd hev reckoned she was a Blue Grass girl jest fresh from across the plains."

A little amused at his foreman's enthusiasm, Mr. Grey gave an ostentatious whistle and said, "Come, now, Richards, look here! Really!"

"Only a little girl — a mere child, Mr. Grey — not more 'n fourteen if a day," responded Richards, in embarrassed depreciation.

"Yes, but those people marry at twelve," said the editor, with a laugh. "Look out! Your appreciation may have been noticed by some other admirer."

He half regretted this speech the next moment in the quick flush — the male instinct of rivalry — that brought back the glitter of Richards's eyes. "I reckon I kin take care of that, sir," he said slowly, "and

I kalkilate that the next time I meet that chap — whoever he may be — he won't see so much of my back as he did."

The editor knew there was little doubt of this, and for an instant believed it his duty to put the matter in the hands of the police. Richards was too good and brave a man to be risked in a bar-room fight. But reflecting that this might precipitate the scandal he wished to avoid, he concluded to make some personal investigation. A stronger curiosity than he had felt before was possessing him. It was singular, too, that Richards's description of the girl was that of a different and superior type — the hidalgo, or fair-skinned Spanish settler. If this was true, what was she doing there — and what were her relations to the Ramierez?

PART II

The next afternoon he went to the fonda. Situated on the outskirts of the town which had long outgrown it, it still bore traces of its former importance as a hacienda, or smaller farm, of one of the old Spanish

landholders. The patio, or central court-yard, still existed as a stable-yard for carts, and even one or two horses were tethered to the railings of the inner corridor, which now served as an open veranda to the fonda or inn. The opposite wing was utilized as a tienda, or general shop, — a magazine for such goods as were used by the Mexican inhabitants, — and belonged also to Ramierez.

Ramierez himself — round-whiskered and Sancho Panza-like in build — welcomed the editor with fat, perfunctory urbanity. The fonda and all it contained was at his disposicion.

The señora coquettishly bewailed, in rising and falling inflections, his long absence, his infidelity and general perfidiousness. Truly he was growing great in writing of the affairs of his nation — he could no longer see his humble friends! Yet not long ago — truly that very week — there was the head impresor of Don Pancho's imprenta himself who had been there!

A great man, of a certainty, and they must take what they could get! They were only poor innkeepers; when the governor came not they must welcome the alcalde.

To which the editor — otherwise Don Pancho — replied with equal effusion. He had indeed recommended the fonda to his impresor, who was but a courier before him. But what was this? The impresor had been ravished at the sight of a beautiful girl — a mere muchacha — yet of a beauty that deprived the senses — this angel — clearly the daughter of his friend! Here was the old miracle of the orange in full fruition and the lovely fragrant blossom all on the same tree — at the fonda. And this had been kept from him!

"Yes, it was but a thing of yesterday," said the señora, obviously pleased. "The muchacha — for she was but that — had just returned from the convent at San José, where she had been for four years. Ah! what would you? The fonda was no place for the child, who should know only the litany of the Virgin — and they had kept her there. And now — that she was home again — she cared only for the horse. From morning to night! Caballeros might come and go! There might be a festival — all the same to her, it made nothing if she had the horse to ride! Even now she was with one

in the fields. Would Don Pancho attend and see Cota and her horse?"

The editor smilingly assented, and accompanied his hostess along the corridor to a few steps which brought them to the level of the open meadows of the old farm inclosure. A slight white figure on horseback was careering in the distance. At a signal from Señora Ramierez it wheeled and came down rapidly towards them. But when within a hundred yards the horse was suddenly pulled up vaquero fashion, and the little figure leaped off and advanced toward them on foot, leading the horse.

To his surprise, Mr. Grey saw that she had been riding bareback, and from her discreet halt at that distance he half suspected *astride!* His effusive compliments to the mother on this exhibition of skill were sincere, for he was struck by the girl's fearlessness. But when both horse and rider at last stood before him, he was speechless and embarrassed.

For Richards had not exaggerated the girl's charms. She was indeed dangerously pretty, from her tawny little head to her small feet, and her figure, although com-

paratively diminutive, was perfectly proportioned. Gray eyed and blonde as she was in color, her racial peculiarities were distinct, and only the good-humored and enthusiastic Richards could have likened her to an American girl.

But he was the more astonished in noticing that her mustang was as distinct and peculiar as herself — a mongrel mare of the extraordinary type known as a "pinto," or "calico" horse, mottled in lavender and pink, Arabian in proportions, and half broken! Her greenish gray eyes, in which too much of the white was visible, had, he fancied, a singular similarity of expression to Cota's own!

Utterly confounded, and staring at the girl in her white, many flounced frock, bare head, and tawny braids, as she stood beside this incarnation of equine barbarism, Grey could remember nothing like it outside of a circus.

He stammered a few words of admiration of the mare. Miss Cota threw out her two arms with a graceful gesture and a profound curtsey, and said —

"*A la disposicion de le Usted, señor.*"

Grey was quick to understand the mali-

cious mischief which underlay this formal curtsey and danced in the girl's eyes, and even fancied it shared by the animal itself. But he was a singularly good rider of untrained stock, and rather proud of his prowess. He bowed.

"I accept that I may have the honor of laying the señorita's gift again at her little feet."

But here the burly Ramierez intervened. "Ah, Mother of God! May the devil fly away with all this nonsense! I will have no more of it," he said impatiently to the girl. "Have a care, Don Pancho," he turned to the editor; "it is a trick!"

"One I think I know," said Grey sapiently. The girl looked at him curiously as he managed to edge between her and the mustang, under the pretense of stroking its glossy neck. "I shall keep *my own* spurs," he said to her in a lower voice, pointing to the sharp, small-roweled American spurs he wore, instead of the large, blunt, five-pointed star of the Mexican pattern.

The girl evidently did not understand him then — though she did a moment later! For without attempting to catch hold of the

mustang's mane, Grey in a single leap threw himself across its back. The animal, utterly unprepared, was at first stupefied. But by this time her rider had his seat. He felt her sensitive spine arch like a cat's beneath him as she sprang rocket-wise into the air.

But here she was mistaken! Instead of clinging tightly to her flanks with the inner side of his calves, after the old vaquero fashion to which she was accustomed, he dropped his spurred heels into her sides and allowed his body to rise with her spring, and the cruel spur to cut its track upward from her belly almost to her back.

She dropped like a shot, he dexterously withdrawing his spurs, and regaining his seat, jarred but not discomfited. Again she essayed a leap; the spurs again marked its height in a scarifying track along her smooth barrel. She tried a third leap, but this time dropped halfway as she felt the steel scraping her side, and then stood still, trembling. Grey leaped off!

There was a sound of applause from the innkeeper and his wife, assisted by a lounging vaquero in the corridor. Ashamed of his victory, Grey turned apologetically to

Cota. To his surprise she glanced indifferently at the trickling sides of her favorite, and only regarded him curiously.

"Ah," she said, drawing in her breath, "you are strong — and you comprehend!"

"It was only a trick for a trick, señorita," he replied, reddening; "let me look after those scratches in the stable," he added, as she was turning away, leading the agitated and excited animal toward a shed in the rear.

He would have taken the riata which she was still holding, but she motioned him to precede her. He did so by a few feet, but he had scarcely reached the stable door before she suddenly caught him roughly by the shoulders, and, shoving him into the entrance, slammed the door upon him.

Amazed and a little indignant, he turned in time to hear a slight sound of scuffling outside, and to see Cota reënter with a flushed face.

"Pardon, señor," she said quickly, "but I feared she might have kicked you. Rest tranquil, however, for the servant he has taken her away."

She pointed to a slouching peon with a

malevolent face, who was angrily driving the mustang toward the corral.

"Consider it no more! I was rude! Santa Maria! I almost threw you, too; but," she added, with a dazzling smile, "you must not punish me as you have her! For you are very strong — and you comprehend."

But Grey did not comprehend, and with a few hurried apologies he managed to escape his fair but uncanny tormentor. Besides, this unlooked-for incident had driven from his mind the more important object of his visit, — the discovery of the assailants of Richards and Colonel Starbottle.

His inquiries of the Ramierez produced no result. Señor Ramierez was not aware of any suspicious loiterers among the frequenters of the fonda, and except from some drunken American or Irish revelers he had been free of disturbance.

Ah! the peon — an old vaquero — was not an angel, truly, but he was dangerous only to the bull and the wild horses — and he was afraid even of Cota! Mr. Grey was fain to ride home empty of information.

He was still more concerned a week later,

on returning unexpectedly one afternoon to his sanctum, to hear a musical, childish voice in the composing-room.

It was Cota! She was there, as Richards explained, on his invitation, to view the marvels and mysteries of printing at a time when they would not be likely to "disturb Mr. Grey at his work." But the beaming face of Richards and the simple tenderness of his blue eyes plainly revealed the sudden growth of an evidently sincere passion, and the unwonted splendors of his best clothes showed how carefully he had prepared for the occasion.

Grey was worried and perplexed, believing the girl a malicious flirt. Yet nothing could be more captivating than her simple and childish curiosity, as she watched Richards swing the lever of the press, or stood by his side as he marshaled the type into files on his "composing-stick." He had even printed a card with her name, "Señorita Cota Ramierez," the type of which had been set up, to the accompaniment of ripples of musical laughter, by her little brown fingers.

The editor might have become quite sentimental and poetical had he not noticed that

the gray eyes which often rested tentatively and meaningly on himself, even while apparently listening to Richards, were more than ever like the eyes of the mustang on whose scarred flanks her glance had wandered so coldly.

He withdrew presently so as not to interrupt his foreman's innocent *tête-à-tête*, but it was not very long after that Cota passed him on the highroad with the pinto horse in a gallop, and blew him an audacious kiss from the tips of her fingers.

For several days afterwards Richards's manner was tinged with a certain reserve on the subject of Cota which the editor attributed to the delicacy of a serious affection, but he was surprised also to find that his foreman's eagerness to discuss his unknown assailant had somewhat abated. Further discussion regarding it naturally dropped, and the editor was beginning to lose his curiosity when it was suddenly awakened by a chance incident.

An intimate friend and old companion of his — one Enriquez Saltillo — had diverged from a mountain trip especially to call upon him. Enriquez was a scion of one of the

oldest Spanish-California families, and in addition to his friendship for the editor it pleased him also to affect an intense admiration of American ways and habits, and even to combine the current California slang with his native precision of speech — and a certain ironical levity still more his own.

It seemed, therefore, quite natural to Mr. Grey to find him seated with his feet on the editorial desk, his hat cocked on the back of his head, reading the "Clarion" exchanges. But he was up in a moment, and had embraced Grey with characteristic effusion.

"I find myself, my leetle brother, but an hour ago two leagues from this spot! I say to myself, 'Hola! It is the home of Don Pancho — my friend! I shall find him composing the magnificent editorial leader, collecting the subscription of the big pumpkin and the great gooseberry, or gouging out the eye of the rival editor, at which I shall assist!' I hesitate no longer; I fly on the instant, and I am here."

Grey was delighted. Saltillo knew the Spanish population thoroughly — his own superior race and their Mexican and Indian allies. If any one could solve the mystery

of the Ramierez fonda, and discover Richards's unknown assailant, it was *he!* But Grey contented himself, at first, with a few brief inquiries concerning the beautiful Cota and her anonymous association with the Ramierez. Enriquez was as briefly communicative.

"Of your suspicions, my leetle brother, you are right — on the half! That leetle angel of a Cota is, without doubt, the daughter of the adorable Señora Ramierez, but not of the admirable señor — her husband. Ah! what would you? We are a simple, patriarchal race; thees Ramierez, he was the Mexican tenant of the old Spanish landlord — such as my father — and we are ever the fathers of the poor, and sometimes of their children. It is possible, therefore, that the exquisite Cota resemble the Spanish landlord. Ah! stop — remain tranquil! I remember," he went on, suddenly striking his forehead with a dramatic gesture, "the old owner of thees ranch was my cousin Tiburcio. Of a consequence, my friend, thees angel is my second cousin! Behold! I shall call there on the instant. I shall embrace my long-lost relation. I shall intro-

duce my best friend, Don Pancho, who lofe her. I shall say, 'Bless you, my children,' and it is feenish! I go! I am gone even now!"

He started up and clapped on his hat, but Grey caught him by the arm.

"For Heaven's sake, Enriquez, be serious for once," he said, forcing him back into the chair. "And don't speak so loud. The foreman in the other room is an enthusiastic admirer of the girl. In fact, it is on his account that I am making these inquiries."

"Ah, the gentleman of the pantuflos, whose trousers will not remain! I have seen him, friend. Truly he has the ambition excessif to arrive from the bed to go to the work without the dress or the wash. But," in recognition of Grey's half serious impatience, "remain tranquil. On him I shall not go back! I have said! The friend of my friend is ever the same as my friend! He is truly not seducing to the eye, but without doubt he will arrive a governor or a senator in good time. I shall gif to him my second cousin. It is feenish! I will tell him now!"

He attempted to rise, but was held down and vigorously shaken by Grey.

"I 've half a mind to let you do it, and get chucked through the window for your pains," said the editor, with a half laugh. "Listen to me. This is a more serious matter than you suppose."

And Grey briefly recounted the incident of the mysterious attacks on Starbottle and Richards. As he proceeded he noticed, however, that the ironical light died out of Enriquez's eyes, and a singular thoughtfulness, yet unlike his usual precise gravity, came over his face. He twirled the ends of his penciled mustache — an unfailing sign of Enriquez's emotion.

"The same accident that arrive to two men that shall be as opposite as the gallant Starbottle and the excellent Richards shall not prove that it come from Ramierez, though they both were at the fonda," he said gravely. "The cause of it have not come to-day, nor yesterday, nor last week. The cause of it have arrive before there was any gallant Starbottle or excellent Richards; before there was any American in California — before you and I, my leetle brother, have lif! The cause happen first — *two hundred years ago!*"

The editor's start of impatient incredulity was checked by the unmistakable sincerity of Enriquez's face. "It is so," he went on gravely; "it is an old story — it is a long story. I shall make him short — and new."

He stopped and lit a cigarette without changing his odd expression.

"It was when the padres first have the mission, and take the heathen and convert him — and save his soul. It was their business, you comprehend, my Pancho? The more heathen they convert, the more soul they save, the better business for their mission shop. But the heathen do not always wish to be 'convert;' the heathen fly, the heathen skidaddle, the heathen will not remain, or will backslide. What will you do? So the holy fathers make a little game. You do not of a possibility comprehend how the holy fathers make a convert, my leetle brother?" he added gravely.

"No," said the editor.

"I shall tell to you. They take from the presidio five or six dragons — you comprehend — the cavalry soldiers, and they pursue the heathen from his little hut. When they cannot surround him and he fly, they

catch him with the lasso, like the wild hoss. The lasso catch him around the neck; he is obliged to remain. Sometime he is strangle. Sometime he is dead, but the soul is save! You believe not, Pancho? I see you wrinkle the brow — you flash the eye; you like it not? Believe me, I like it not, neither, but it is so!"

He shrugged his shoulders, threw away his half smoked cigarette, and went on.

"One time a padre who have the zeal excessif for the saving of soul, when he find the heathen, who is a young girl, have escape the soldiers, he of himself have seize the lasso and flung it! He is lucky; he catch her — but look you! She stop not — she still fly! She not only fly, but of a surety she drag the good padre with her! He cannot loose himself, for his riata is fast to the saddle; the dragons cannot help, for he is drag so fast. On the instant she have gone — and so have the padre. For why? It is not a young girl he have lasso, but the devil! You comprehend — it is a punishment — a retribution — he is feenish! And forever!

"For every year he must come back a

spirit — on a spirit hoss — and swing the lasso, and make as if to catch the heathen. He is condemn ever to play his little game; now there is no heathen more to convert, he catch what he can. My grandfather have once seen him — it is night and a storm, and he pass by like a flash! My grandfather like it not — he is much dissatisfied! My uncle have seen him, too, but he make the sign of the cross, and the lasso have fall to the side, and my uncle have much gratification. A vaquero of my father and a peon of my cousin have both been picked up, lassoed, and dragged dead.

"Many peoples have died of him in the strangling. Sometime he is seen, sometime it is the woman only that one sees — sometime it is but the hoss. But ever somebody is dead — strangle! Of a truth, my friend, the gallant Starbottle and the ambitious Richards have just escaped!"

The editor looked curiously at his friend. There was not the slightest suggestion of mischief or irony in his tone or manner; nothing, indeed, but a sincerity and anxiety usually rare with his temperament. It struck him also that his speech had but little of the

odd California slang which was always a part of his imitative levity. He was puzzled.

"Do you mean to say that this superstition is well known?" he asked, after a pause.

"Among my people — yes."

"And do *you* believe in it?"

Enriquez was silent. Then he arose, and shrugged his shoulders. "*Quien sabe?* It is not more difficult to comprehend than your story."

He gravely put on his hat. With it he seemed to have put on his old levity. "Come, behold, it is a long time between drinks! Let us to the hotel and the barkeep, who shall give up the smash of brandy and the julep of mints before the lasso of Friar Pedro shall prevent us the swallow! Let us skiddadle!"

Mr. Grey returned to the "Clarion" office in a much more satisfied condition of mind. Whatever faith he held in Enriquez's sincerity, for the first time since the attack on Colonel Starbottle he believed he had found a really legitimate journalistic opportunity in the incident. The legend and its singular coincidence with the outrages would make capital "copy."

No names would be mentioned, yet even if Colonel Starbottle recognized his own adventure, he could not possibly object to this interpretation of it. The editor had found that few people objected to be the hero of a ghost story, or the favored witness of a spiritual manifestation. Nor could Richards find fault with this view of his own experience, hitherto kept a secret, so long as it did not refer to his relations with the fair Cota. Summoning him at once to his sanctum, he briefly repeated the story he had just heard, and his purpose of using it. To his surprise, Richards's face assumed a seriousness and anxiety equal to Enriquez's own.

"It 's a good story, Mr. Grey," he said awkwardly, "and I ain't sayin' it ain't mighty good newspaper stuff, but it won't do *now*, for the whole mystery 's up and the assailant found."

"Found! When? Why did n't you tell me before?" exclaimed Grey, in astonishment.

"I did n't reckon ye were so keen on it," said Richards embarrassedly, "and — and — it was n't my own secret altogether."

"Go on," said the editor impatiently.

"Well," said Richards slowly and doggedly, "ye see there was a fool that was sweet on Cota, and he allowed himself to be bedeviled by her to ride her cursed pink and yaller mustang. Naturally the beast bolted at once, but he managed to hang on by the mane for half a mile or so, when it took to buck-jumpin'. The first 'buck' threw him clean into the road, but did n't stun him, yet when he tried to rise, the first thing he knowed he was grabbed from behind and half choked by somebody. He was held so tight that he could n't turn, but he managed to get out his revolver and fire two shots under his arm. The grip held on for a minute, and then loosened, and the somethin' slumped down on top o' him, but he managed to work himself around. And then — what do you think he saw? — why, that thar hoss! with two bullet holes in his neck, lyin' beside him, but still grippin' his coat collar and neck-handkercher in his teeth! Yes, sir! the rough that attacked Colonel Starbottle, the villain that took me behind when I was leanin' agin that cursed fence, was that same God-forsaken, hell-invented pinto hoss!"

In a flash of recollection the editor remembered his own experience, and the singular scuffle outside the stable door of the fonda. Undoubtedly Cota had saved him from a similar attack.

"But why not tell this story with the other?" said the editor, returning to his first idea. "It 's tremendously interesting."

"It won't do," said Richards, with dogged resolution.

"Why?"

"Because, Mr. Grey — that fool was myself!"

"You! Again attacked!"

"Yes," said Richards, with a darkening face. "Again attacked, and by the same hoss! Cota's hoss! Whether Cota was or was not knowin' its tricks, she was actually furious at me for killin' it — and it 's all over 'twixt me and her."

"Nonsense," said the editor impulsively; "she will forgive you! You did n't know your assailant was a horse *when you fired.* Look at the attack on you in the road!"

Richards shook his head with dogged hopelessness. "It 's no use, Mr. Grey. I oughter guessed it was a hoss then — thar

was nothin' else in that corral. No! Cota 's already gone away back to San José, and I reckon the Ramierez has got scared of her and packed her off. So, on account of its bein' *her* hoss, and what happened betwixt me and her, you see my mouth is shut."

"And the columns of the 'Clarion' too," said the editor, with a sigh.

"I know it 's hard, sir, but it 's better so. I 've reckoned mebbe she was a little crazy, and since you 've told me that Spanish yarn, it mout be that she was sort o' playin' she was that priest, and trained that mustang ez she did."

After a pause, something of his old self came back into his blue eyes as he sadly hitched up his braces and passed them over his broad shoulders. "Yes, sir, I was a fool, for we 've lost the only bit of real sensation news that ever came in the way of the 'Clarion.'"

A JACK AND JILL OF THE SIERRAS

It was four o'clock in the afternoon, and the hottest hour of the day on that Sierran foothill. The western sun, streaming down the mile-long slope of close-set pine crests, had been caught on an outlying ledge of glaring white quartz, covered with mining tools and débris, and seemed to have been thrown into an incandescent rage. The air above it shimmered and became visible. A white canvas tent on it was an object not to be borne; the steel-tipped picks and shovels, intolerable to touch and eyesight, and a tilted tin prospecting pan, falling over, flashed out as another sun of insufferable effulgence. At such moments the five members of the "Eureka Mining Company" prudently withdrew to the nearest pine-tree, which cast a shadow so sharply defined on the glistening sand that the impingement of a hand or finger beyond that line cut like a knife. The men lay, or squatted, in this

shadow, feverishly puffing their pipes and waiting for the sun to slip beyond the burning ledge. Yet so irritating was the dry air, fragrant with the aroma of the heated pines, that occasionally one would start up and walk about until he had brought on that profuse perspiration which gave a momentary relief, and, as he believed, saved him from sunstroke. Suddenly a voice exclaimed querulously: —

"Derned if the blasted bucket ain't empty ag'in! Not a drop left, by Jimminy!"

A stare of helpless disgust was exchanged by the momentarily uplifted heads; then every man lay down again, as if trying to erase himself.

"Who brought the last?" demanded the foreman.

"*I* did," said a reflective voice coming from a partner lying comfortably on his back, "and if anybody reckons I'm going to face Tophet ag'in down that slope, he's mistaken!" The speaker was thirsty — but he had principles.

"We must throw round for it," said the foreman, taking the dice from his pocket.

He cast; the lowest number fell to Park-

hurst, a florid, full-blooded Texan. "All right, gentlemen," he said, wiping his forehead, and lifting the tin pail with a resigned air, "only *ef* anything comes to me on that bare stretch o' stage road, — and I 'm kinder seein' things spotty and black now, — remember you ain't anywhar *nearer* the water than you were! I ain't sayin' it for myself — but it mout be rough on *you* — and" —

"Give *me* the pail," interrupted a tall young fellow, rising. "I 'll risk it."

Cries of "Good old Ned," and "Hunky boy!" greeted him as he took the pail from the perspiring Parkhurst, who at once lay down again. "You may n't be a professin' Christian, in good standin', Ned Bray," continued Parkhurst from the ground, "but you 're about as white as they make 'em, and you 're goin' to do a Heavenly Act! I repeat it, gents — a Heavenly Act!"

Without a reply Bray walked off with the pail, stopping only in the underbrush to pluck a few soft fronds of fern, part of which he put within the crown of his hat, and stuck the rest in its band around the outer brim, making a parasol-like shade

above his shoulders. Thus equipped he passed through the outer fringe of pines to a rocky trail which began to descend towards the stage road. Here he was in the full glare of the sun and its reflection from the heated rocks, which scorched his feet and pricked his bent face into a rash. The descent was steep and necessarily slow from the slipperiness of the desiccated pine needles that had fallen from above. Nor were his troubles over when, a few rods further, he came upon the stage road, which here swept in a sharp curve round the flank of the mountain. Its red dust, ground by heavy wagons and pack-trains into a fine powder, was nevertheless so heavy with some metallic substance that it scarcely lifted with the foot, and he was obliged to literally wade through it. Yet there were two hundred yards of this road to be passed before he could reach that point of its bank where a narrow and precipitous trail dropped diagonally from it, to creep along the mountain side to the spring he was seeking.

When he reached the trail, he paused to take breath and wipe the blinding beads of sweat from his eyes before he cautiously

swung himself over the bank into it. A single misstep here would have sent him headlong to the tops of pine-trees a thousand feet below. Holding his pail in one hand, with the other he steadied himself by clutching the ferns and brambles at his side, and at last reached the spring — a niche in the mountain side with a ledge scarcely four feet wide. He had merely accomplished the ordinary gymnastic feat performed by the members of the Eureka Company four or five times a day! But the day was exceptionally hot. He held his wrists to cool their throbbing pulses in the clear, cold stream that gurgled into its rocky basin; he threw the water over his head and shoulders; he swung his legs over the ledge and let the overflow fall on his dusty shoes and ankles. Gentle and delicious rigors came over him. He sat with half closed eyes looking across the dark olive depths of the cañon between him and the opposite mountain. A hawk was swinging lazily above it, apparently within a stone's throw of him; he knew it was at least a mile away. Thirty feet above him ran the stage road; he could hear quite distinctly the slow thud of hoofs, the dull jar

of harness, and the labored creaking of the Pioneer Coach as it crawled up the long ascent, part of which he had just passed. He thought of it, — a slow drifting cloud of dust and heat, as he had often seen it, abandoned by even its passengers, who sought shelter in the wayside pines as they toiled behind it to the summit, — and hugged himself in the grateful shadows of the spring. It had passed out of hearing and thought, he had turned to fill his pail, when he was startled by a shower of dust and gravel from the road above, and the next moment he was thrown violently down, blinded and pinned against the ledge by the fall of some heavy body on his back and shoulders. His last flash of consciousness was that he had been struck by a sack of flour slipped from the pack of some passing mule.

How long he remained unconscious he never knew. It was probably not long, for his chilled hands and arms, thrust by the blow on his shoulders into the pool of water, assisted in restoring him. He came to with a sense of suffocating pressure on his back, but his head and shoulders were swathed in utter darkness by the folds of some soft

fabrics and draperies, which, to his connecting consciousness, seemed as if the contents of a broken bale or trunk had also fallen from the pack. With a tremendous effort he suceeeded in getting his arm out of the pool, and attempted to free his head from its blinding enwrappings. In doing so his hand suddenly touched human flesh — a soft, bared arm! With the same astounding discovery came one more terrible: that arm belonged to the weight that was pressing him down; and now, assisted by his struggles, it was slowly slipping toward the brink of the ledge and the abyss below! With a desperate effort he turned on his side, caught the body, — as such it was, — dragged it back on the ledge, at the same moment that, freeing his head from its covering, — a feminine skirt, — he discovered it was a woman!

She had been also unconscious, although the touch of his cold, wet hand on her skin had probably given her a shock that was now showing itself in a convulsive shudder of her shoulders and a half opening of her eyes. Suddenly she began to stare at him, to draw in her knees and feet toward her,

sideways, with a feminine movement, as she smoothed out her skirt, and kept it down with a hand on which she leaned. She was a tall, handsome girl, from what he could judge of her half-sitting figure in her torn silk dust-cloak, which, although its cape and one sleeve were split into ribbons, had still protected her delicate, well-fitting gown beneath. She was evidently a lady.

"What — is it? — what has happened?" she said faintly, yet with a slight touch of formality in her manner.

"You must have fallen — from the road above," said Bray hesitatingly."

"From the road above?" she repeated, with a slight frown, as if to concentrate her thought. She glanced upward, then at the ledge before her, and then, for the first time, at the darkening abyss below. The color, which had begun to return, suddenly left her face here, and she drew instinctively back against the mountain side. "Yes," she half murmured to herself, rather than to him, "it must be so. I was walking too near the bank — and — I fell!" Then turning to him, she said, "And you found me lying here when you came."

"I think," stammered Bray, "that I was here when you fell, and I — I broke the fall." He was sorry for it a moment afterward.

She lifted her handsome gray eyes to him, saw the dust, dirt, and leaves on his back and shoulders, the collar of his shirt torn open, and a few spots of blood from a bruise on his forehead. Her black eyebrows straightened again as she said coldly, "Dear me! I am very sorry; I could n't help it, you know. I hope you are not otherwise hurt."

"No," he replied quickly. "But you, are you sure you are not injured? It must have been a terrible shock."

"I 'm not hurt," she said, helping herself to her feet by the aid of the mountain-side bushes, and ignoring his proffered hand. "But," she added quickly and impressively, glancing upward toward the stage road overhead, "why don't they come? They must have missed me! I must have been here a long time; it 's too bad!"

"*They* missed you?" he repeated diffidently.

"Yes," she said impatiently, "of course! I was n't alone. Don't you understand? I

got out of the coach to walk uphill on the bank under the trees. It was so hot and stuffy. My foot must have slipped up there — and — I — slid — down. Have you heard any one calling me? Have you called out yourself?"

Mr. Bray did not like to say he had only just recovered consciousness. He smiled vaguely and foolishly. But on turning around in her impatience, she caught sight of the chasm again, and lapsed quite white against the mountain side.

"Let me give you some water from the spring," he said eagerly, as she sank again to a sitting posture; "it will refresh you."

He looked hesitatingly around him; he had neither cup nor flask, but he filled the pail and held it with great dexterity to her lips. She drank a little, extracted a lace handkerchief from some hidden pocket, dipped its point in the water, and wiped her face delicately, after a certain feline fashion. Then, catching sight of some small object in the fork of a bush above her, she quickly pounced upon it, and with a swift sweep of her hand under her skirt, put on *her fallen slipper*, and stood on her feet again.

"How does one get out of such a place?" she asked fretfully, and then, glancing at him half indignantly, "why don't you shout?"

"I was going to tell you," he said gently, "that when you are a little stronger, we can get out by the way I came in, — along the trail."

He pointed to the narrow pathway along the perilous incline. Somehow, with this tall, beautiful creature beside him, it looked more perilous than before. She may have thought so too, for she drew in her breath sharply and sank down again.

"Is there no other way?"

"None!"

"How did *you* happen to be here?" she asked suddenly, opening her gray eyes upon him. "What did you come here for?" she went on, almost impertinently.

"To fetch a pail of water." He stopped, and then it suddenly occurred to him that after all there was no reason for his being bullied by this tall, good-looking girl, even if he *had* saved her. He gave a little laugh, and added mischievously, "Just like Jack and Jill, you know."

"What?" she said sharply, bending her black brows at him.

"Jack and Jill," he returned carelessly; "*I* broke my crown, you know, and *you*," — he did not finish.

She stared at him, trying to keep her face and her composure; but a smile, that on her imperious lips he thought perfectly adorable, here lifted the corners of her mouth, and she turned her face aside. But the smile, and the line of dazzling little teeth it revealed, were unfortunately on the side toward him. Emboldened by this, he went on, "I could n't think what had happened. At first I had a sort of idea that part of a mule's pack had fallen on top of me, — blankets, flour, and all that sort of thing, you know, until" —

Her smile had vanished. "Well," she said impatiently, "until?"

"Until I touched you. I 'm afraid I gave you a shock; my hand was dripping from the spring."

She colored so quickly that he knew she must have been conscious at the time, and he noticed now that the sleeve of her cloak, which had been half torn off her bare arm, was pinned together over it. When and how had she managed to do it without his detecting the act?

"At all events," she said coldly, "I 'm glad you have not received greater injury from — your mule pack."

"I think we've both been very lucky," he said simply.

She did not reply, but remained looking furtively at the narrow trail. Then she listened. "I thought I heard voices," she said, half rising.

"Shall I shout?" he asked.

"No! You say there 's no use — there 's only this way out of it!"

"I might go up first, and perhaps get assistance — a rope or chair," he suggested.

"And leave me here alone?" she cried, with a horrified glance at the abyss. "No, thank you! I should be over that ledge before you came back! There 's a dreadful fascination in it even now. No! I think I 'd rather go — at once! I never shall be stronger as long as I stay near it; I may be weaker."

She gave a petulant little shiver, and then, though paler and evidently agitated, composed her tattered and dusty outer garments in a deft, ladylike way, and leaned back against the mountain side. He saw

her also glance at his loosened shirt front and hanging neckerchief, and with a heightened color he quickly re-knotted it around his throat. They moved from the ledge toward the trail. Suddenly she started back.

"But it 's only wide enough for *one*, and I never — *never* — could even stand on it a minute alone!" she exclaimed.

He looked at her critically. "We will go together, side by side," he said quietly, "but you will have to take the outside."

"Outside!" she repeated, recoiling. "Impossible! I shall fall."

"I shall keep hold of you," he explained; "you need not fear that. Stop! I 'll make it safer." He untied the large bandanna silk handkerchief which he wore around his shoulders, knotted one end of it firmly to his belt, and handed her the other.

"Do you think you can hold on to that?"

"I — don't know" — she hesitated. "If I should fall?"

"Stay a moment! Is your belt strong?" He pointed to a girdle of yellow leather which caught her tunic around her small waist.

"Yes," she said eagerly, "it 's real leather."

He gently slipped the edge of the handkerchief under it and knotted it. They were thus linked together by a foot of handkerchief.

"I feel much safer," she said, with a faint smile.

"But if *I* should fall," he remarked, looking into her eyes, "you would go too! Have you thought of that?"

"Yes." Her previous charming smile returned. "It would be really Jack and Jill this time."

They passed out on the trail. "Now I must take *your* arm," he said laughingly; "not you *mine*." He passed his arm under hers, holding it firmly. It was the one he had touched. For the first few steps her uncertain feet took no hold of the sloping mountain side, which seemed to slip sideways beneath her. He was literally carrying her on his shoulder. But in a few moments she saw how cleverly he balanced himself, always leaning toward the hillside, and presently she was able to help him by a few steps. She expressed her surprise at his skill.

"It 's nothing; I carry a pail of water up here without spilling a drop."

She stiffened slightly under this remark, and indeed so far overdid her attempt to walk without his aid, that her foot slipped on a stone, and she fell outward toward the abyss. But in an instant his arm was transferred from her elbow to her waist, and in the momentum of his quick recovery they both landed panting against the mountain side.

"I 'm afraid you 'd have spilt the pail that time," she said, with a slightly heightened color, as she disengaged herself gently from his arm.

"No," he answered boldly, "for the pail never would have stiffened itself in a tiff, and tried to go alone."

"Of course not, if it were only a pail," she responded.

They moved on again in silence. The trail was growing a little steeper toward the upper end and the road bank. Bray was often himself obliged to seek the friendly aid of a manzanita or thornbush to support them. Suddenly she stopped and caught his arm. "There!" she said. "Listen! They 're coming!"

Bray listened; he could hear at intervals

a far-off shout; then a nearer one — a name — "Eugenia." So that was *hers!*

"Shall I shout back?" he asked.

"Not yet!" she answered. "Are we near the top?" A sudden glow of pleasure came over him — he knew not why, except that she did not look delighted, excited, or even relieved.

"Only a few yards more," he said, with an unaffected half sigh.

"Then I'd better untie this," she suggested, beginning to fumble at the knot of the handkerchief which linked them.

Their heads were close together, their fingers often met; he would have liked to say something, but he could only add: "Are you sure you will feel quite safe? It is a little steeper as we near the bank."

"You can hold me," she replied simply, with a superbly unconscious lifting of her arm, as she yielded her waist to him again, but without raising her eyes.

He did, — holding her rather tightly, I fear, as they clambered up the remaining slope, for it seemed to him as a last embrace. As he lifted her to the road bank, the shouts came nearer; and glancing up, he

saw two men and a woman running down the hill toward them. He turned to Eugenia. In that instant she had slipped the tattered dust-coat from her shoulder, thrown it over her arm, set her hat straight, and was calmly awaiting them with a self-possession and coolness that seemed to shame their excitement. He noticed, too, with the quick perception of unimportant things which comes to some natures at such moments, that she had plucked a sprig of wild myrtle from the mountain side, and was wearing it on her breast.

"Goodness Heavens! Genie! What has happened! Where have you been?"

"Eugenia! this is perfect madness!" began the elder man didactically. "You have alarmed us beyond measure — kept the stage waiting, and now it is gone!"

"Genie! Look here, I say! We 've been hunting for you everywhere. What 's up?" said the younger man, with brotherly brusqueness.

As these questions were all uttered in the same breath, Eugenia replied to them collectively. "It was so hot that I kept along the bank here, while you were on the other side.

I heard the trickle of water somewhere down there, and searching for it my foot slipped. This gentleman" — she indicated Bray — "was on a little sort of a trail there, and assisted me back to the road again."

The two men and the woman turned and stared at Bray with a look of curiosity that changed quickly into a half contemptuous unconcern. They saw a youngish sort of man, with a long mustache, a two days' growth of beard, a not overclean face, that was further streaked with red on the temple, a torn flannel shirt, that showed a very white shoulder beside a sunburnt throat and neck, and soiled white trousers stuck into muddy high boots — in fact, the picture of a broken-down miner. But their unconcern was as speedily changed again into resentment at the perfect ease and equality with which he regarded them, — a regard the more exasperating as it was not without a suspicion of his perception of some satire or humor in the situation.

"Ahem! very much obliged, I am sure. I — er" —

"The lady has thanked me," interrupted Bray, with a smile.

"Did you fall far?" said the younger man to Eugenia, ignoring Bray.

"Not far," she answered, with a half appealing look at Bray.

"Only a few feet," added the latter, with prompt mendacity, "just a little slip down."

The three new-comers here turned away, and, surrounding Eugenia, conversed in an undertone. Quite conscious that he was the subject of discussion, Bray lingered only in the hope of catching a parting glance from Eugenia. The words "*You* do it," "No, *you!*" "It would come better from *her*," were distinctly audible to him. To his surprise, however, she suddenly broke through them, and advancing to him, with a dangerous brightness in her beautiful eyes, held out her slim hand. "My father, Mr. Neworth, my brother, Harry Neworth, and my aunt, Mrs. Dobbs," she said, indicating each one with a graceful inclination of her handsome head, "all think I ought to give you something and send you away. I believe that is the way they put it. *I* think differently! I come to ask you to let me once more thank you for your good service to me to-day — which I shall never forget."

When he had returned her firm handclasp for a minute, she coolly rejoined the discomfited group.

"She 's no sardine," said Bray to himself emphatically, "but I suspect she 'll catch it from her folks for this. I ought to have gone away at once, like a gentleman, hang it!"

He was even angrily debating with himself whether he ought not to follow her to protect her from her gesticulating relations as they all trailed up the hill with her, when he reflected that it would only make matters worse. And with it came the dreadful reflection that as yet he had not carried the water to his expecting and thirsty comrades. He had forgotten them for these lazy, snobbish, purse-proud San Franciscans — for Bray had the miner's supreme contempt for the moneyed trading classes. What would the boys think of him! He flung himself over the bank, and hastened recklessly down the trail to the spring. But here again he lingered — the place had become suddenly hallowed. How deserted it looked without her! He gazed eagerly around on the ledge for any trace that she had left — a bow, a

bit of ribbon, or even a hairpin that had fallen from her.

As the young man slowly filled the pail he caught sight of his own reflection in the spring. It certainly was not that of an Adonis! He laughed honestly; his sense of humor had saved him from many an extravagance, and mitigated many a disappointment before this. Well! She was a plucky, handsome girl — even if she was not for him, and he might never set eyes on her again. Yet it was a hard pull up that trail once more, carrying an insensible pail of water in the hand that had once sustained a lovely girl! He remembered her reply to his badinage, "Of course not — if it were only a pail," and found a dozen pretty interpretations of it. Yet he was not in love! No! He was too poor and too level headed for that! And he was unaffectedly and materially tired, too, when he reached the road again, and rested, leaving the spring and its little idyl behind.

By this time the sun had left the burning ledge of the Eureka Company, and the stage road was also in shadow, so that his return through its heavy dust was less difficult.

And when he at last reached the camp, he found to his relief that his prolonged absence had been overlooked by his thirsty companions in a larger excitement and disappointment; for it appeared that a well-known San Francisco capitalist, whom the foreman had persuaded to visit their claim with a view to advance and investment, had actually come over from Red Dog for that purpose, and had got as far as the summit when he was stopped by an accident, and delayed so long that he was obliged to go on to Sacramento without making his examination.

"That was only his excuse — mere flapdoodle!" interrupted the pessimistic Jerrold. "He was foolin' you; he'd heard of suthin better! The idea of calling that affair an 'accident,' or one that would stop any man who meant business!"

Bray had become uneasily conscious. "What was the accident?" he asked.

"A d—d fool woman's accident," broke in the misogynist Parkhurst, "and it's true! That's what makes it so cussed mean. For there's allus a woman at the bottom of such things — bet your life! Think of 'em comin' here. Thar ought to be a law agin it."

"But what was it?" persisted Bray, becoming more apprehensive.

"Why, what does that blasted fool of a capitalist do but bring with him his daughter and auntie to 'see the wonderful scenery with popa dear!' as if it was a cheap Sunday-school panorama! And what do these chuckle-headed women do but get off the coach and go to wanderin' about, and playin' 'here we go round the mulberry bush' until one of 'em tumbles down a ravine. And then there 's a great to do! and 'dear popa' was up and down the road yellin' 'Me cheyld! me cheyld!' And then there was camphor and sal volatile and eau de cologne to be got, and the coach goes off, and 'popa dear' gets left, and then has to hurry off in a buggy to catch it. So *we* get left too, just because that God-forsaken fool, Neworth, brings his women here."

Under this recital poor Bray sat as completely crushed as when the fair daughter of Neworth had descended upon his shoulders at the spring. He saw it all! *His* was the fault. It was *his* delay and dalliance with her that had checked Neworth's visit; worse than that, it was his subsequent audacity and

her defense of him that would probably prevent any renewal of the negotiations. He had shipwrecked his partners' prospects in his absurd vanity and pride! He did not dare to raise his eyes to their dejected faces. He would have confessed everything to them, but the same feeling of delicacy for her which had determined him to keep her adventures to himself now forever sealed his lips. How might they not misconstrue his conduct — and *hers!* Perhaps something of this was visible in his face.

"Come, old man," said the cheerful misogynist, with perfect innocence, "don't take it so hard. Some time in a man's life a woman 's sure to get the drop on him, as I said afore, and this yer woman's got the drop on five of us! But — hallo, Ned, old man — what 's the matter with your head?" He laid his hand gently on the matted temple of his younger partner.

"I had — a slip — on the trail," he stammered. "Had to go back again for another pailful. That 's what delayed me, you know, boys," he added. "But it 's nothing!"

"Nothing!" ejaculated Parkhurst, clapping him on the back and twisting him

around by the shoulders so that he faced his companions. "Nothing! Look at him, gentlemen; and he says it's 'nothing.' That 's how a *man* takes it! *He* did n't go round yellin' and wringin' his hands and sayin' 'Me pay-l! me pay-l!' when it spilt! He just humped himself and trotted back for another. And yet every drop of water in that overset bucket meant hard work and hard sweat, and was as precious as gold."

Luckily for Bray, whose mingled emotions under Parkhurst's eloquence were beginning to be hysterical, the foreman interrupted.

"Well, boys! it 's time we got to work again, and took another heave at the old ledge! But now that this job of Neworth's is over — I don't mind tellin' ye suthin." As their leader usually spoke but little, and to the point, the four men gathered around him. "Although I engineered this affair, and got it up, somehow, I never *saw* that Neworth standing on this ledge! No, boys! I never saw him *here*." The look of superstition which Bray and the others had often seen on this old miner's face, and which so often showed itself in his acts, was there. "And though I wanted him to come, and

allowed to have him come, I 'm kinder relieved that he did n't, and so let whatsoever luck 's in the air come to us five alone, boys, just as we stand."

The next morning Bray was up before his companions, and although it was not his turn, offered to bring water from the spring. He was not in love with Eugenia — he had not forgotten his remorse of the previous day — but he would like to go there once more before he relentlessly wiped out her image from his mind. And he had heard that although Neworth had gone on to Sacramento, his son and the two ladies had stopped on for a day or two at the ditch superintendent's house on the summit, only two miles away. She might pass on the road; he might get a glimpse of her again and a wave of her hand before this thing was over forever, and he should have to take up the daily routine of his work again. It was not love — of *that* he was assured — but it was the way to stop it by convincing himself of its madness. Besides, in view of all the circumstances, it was his duty as a gentleman to show some concern for her condition after the accident and the disagreeable *contretemps* which followed it.

Thus Bray! Alas, none of these possibilities occurred. He found the spring had simply lapsed into its previous unsuggestive obscurity, — a mere niche in the mountain side that held only — water! The stage road was deserted save for an early, curly-headed schoolboy, whom he found lurking on the bank, but who evaded his company and conversation. He returned to the camp quite cured of his fancy. His late zeal as a water-carrier had earned him a day or two's exemption from that duty. His place was taken the next afternoon by the woman-hating Parkhurst, and he was the less concerned by it as he had heard that the same afternoon the ladies were to leave the summit for Sacramento.

But then occurred a singular coincidence. The new water-bringer was as scandalously late in his delivery of the precious fluid as his predecessor! An hour passed and he did not return. His unfortunate partners, toiling away with pick and crowbar on the burning ledge, were clamorous from thirst, and Bray was becoming absurdly uneasy. It could not be possible that Eugenia's accident had been repeated! Or had she

met him with inquiries? But no! she was already gone. The mystery was presently cleared, however, by the abrupt appearance of Parkhurst running towards them, but *without his pail!* The cry of consternation and despair which greeted that discovery was, however, quickly changed by a single breathless, half intelligible sentence he had shot before him from his panting lips. And he was holding something in his outstretched palm that was more eloquent than words. Gold!

In an instant they had him under the shade of the pine-tree, and were squatting round him like schoolboys. He was profoundly agitated. His story, far from being brief, was incoherent and at times seemed irrelevant, but that was characteristic. They would remember that he had always held the theory that, even in quartz mining, the deposits were always found near water, past or present, with signs of fluvial erosion! He did n't call himself one of your blanked scientific miners, but his head was level! It was all very well for them to say "Yes, yes!" *now*, but they did n't use to! Well! when he got to the spring, he

noticed that there had been a kind of landslide above it, of course, from water cleavage, and there was a distinct mark of it on the mountain side, where it had uprooted and thrown over some small bushes!

Excited as Bray was, he recognized with a hysterical sensation the track made by Eugenia in her fall, which he himself had noticed. But he had thought only of *her*.

"When I saw that," continued Parkhurst, more rapidly and coherently, "I saw that there was a crack above the hole where the water came through — as if it had been the old channel of the spring. I widened it a little with my clasp knife, and then — in a little pouch or pocket of decomposed quartz — I found that! Not only that, boys," he continued, rising, with a shout, "but the whole slope above the spring is a mass of seepage underneath, as if you'd played a hydraulic hose on it, and it's ready to tumble and is just rotten with quartz!"

The men leaped to their feet; in another moment they had snatched picks, pans, and shovels, and, the foreman leading, with a coil of rope thrown over his shoulders, were all flying down the trail to the highway.

Their haste was wise. The spring was not on *their* claim; it was known to others; it was doubtful if Parkhurst's discovery with his knife amounted to actual *work* on the soil. They must "take it up" with a formal notice, and get to work at once!

In an hour they were scattered over the mountain side, like bees clinging to the fragrant slope of laurel and myrtle above the spring. An excavation was made beside it, and the ledge broadened by a dozen feet. Even the spring itself was utilized to wash the hastily filled prospecting pans. And when the Pioneer Coach slowly toiled up the road that afternoon, the passengers stared at the scarcely dry "Notice of Location" pinned to the pine by the road bank, whence Eugenia had fallen two days before!

Eagerly and anxiously as Edward Bray worked with his companions, it was with more conflicting feelings. There was a certain sense of desecration in their act. How her proud lip would have curled had she seen him — he who but a few hours before would have searched the whole slope for the treasure of a ribbon, a handkerchief, or a

bow from her dress — now delving and picking the hillside for that fortune her accident had so mysteriously disclosed. Mysteriously he believed, for he had not fully accepted Parkhurst's story. That gentle misogynist had never been an active prospector; an inclination to theorize without practice and to combat his partners' experience were all against his alleged process of discovery, although the gold was actually there; and his conduct that afternoon was certainly peculiar. He did but little of the real work; but wandered from man to man, with suggestions, advice, and exhortations, and the air of a superior patron. This might have been characteristic, but mingled with it was a certain nervous anxiety and watchfulness. He was continually scanning the stage road and the trail, staring eagerly at any wayfarer in the distance, and at times falling into fits of strange abstraction. At other times he would draw near to one of his fellow partners, as if for confidential disclosure, and then check himself and wander aimlessly away. And it was not until evening came that the mystery was solved.

The prospecting pans had been duly

washed and examined, the slope above and below had been fully explored and tested, with a result and promise that outran their most sanguine hopes. There was no mistaking the fact that they had made a "big" strike. That singular gravity and reticence, so often observed in miners at these crises, had come over them as they sat that night for the last time around their old camp-fire on the Eureka ledge, when Parkhurst turned impulsively to Bray. "Roll over here," he said in a whisper. "I want to tell ye suthin!"

Bray "rolled" beyond the squatting circle, and the two men gradually edged themselves out of hearing of the others. In the silent abstraction that prevailed nobody noticed them.

"It 's got suthin to do with this discovery," said Parkhurst, in a low, mysterious tone, "but as far as the gold goes, and our equal rights to it as partners, it don't affect them. If I," he continued in a slightly patronizing, paternal tone, "choose to make you and the other boys sharers in what seems to be a special Providence to *me*, I reckon we won't quarrel on it. It 's a mighty curi-

ous, singular thing. It 's one of those things ye read about in books and don't take any stock in! But we 've got the gold — and I 've got the black and white to prove it — even if it ain't exactly human."

His voice sank so low, his manner was so impressive, that despite his known exaggeration, Bray felt a slight thrill of superstition. Meantime Parkhurst wiped his brow, took a folded slip of paper and a sprig of laurel from his pocket, and drew a long breath.

"When I got to the spring this afternoon," he went on, in a nervous, tremulous, and scarcely audible voice, "I saw this bit o' paper, folded note-wise, lyin' on the ledge before it. On top of it was this sprig of laurel, to catch the eye. I ain't the man to pry into other folks' secrets, or read what ain't mine. But on the back o' this note was written 'To Jack!' It 's a common enough name, but it 's a singular thing, ef you 'll recollect, thar ain't *another* Jack in this company, not on the whole ridge betwixt this and the summit, except *myself!* So I opened it, and this is what it read!" He held the paper sideways toward the leaping

light of the still near camp-fire, and read slowly, with the emphasis of having read it many times before.

"'I want you to believe that *I*, at least, respect and honor your honest, manly calling, and when you strike it rich, as you surely will, I hope you will sometimes think of Jill.'"

In the thrill of joy, hope, and fear that came over Bray, he could see that Parkhurst had not only failed to detect his secret, but had not even connected the two names with their obvious suggestion. "But do you know anybody named Jill?" he asked breathlessly.

"It's no *name*," said Parkhurst in a sombre voice, "it's a *thing!*"

"A thing?" repeated Bray, bewildered.

"Yes, a measure — you know — two fingers of whiskey."

"Oh, a 'gill,'" said Bray.

"That's what I said, young man," returned Parkhurst gravely.

Bray choked back a hysterical laugh; spelling was notoriously not one of Parkhurst's strong points. "But what has a 'gill' got to do with it?" he asked quickly.

"It's one of them Sphinx things, don't you see? A sort of riddle or rebus, you know. You've got to study it out, as them old chaps did. But I fetched it. What comes after 'gills,' eh?"

"Pints, I suppose," said Bray.

"And after pints?"

"Quarts."

"*Quartz*, and there you are. So I looked about me for quartz, and sure enough struck it the first pop."

Bray cast a quick look at Parkhurst's grave face. The man was evidently impressed and sincere. "Have you told this to any one?" he asked quickly.

"No."

"Then *don't!* or you 'll spoil the charm, and bring us ill luck! That 's the rule, you know. I really don't know that you ought to have told me," added the artful Bray, dissembling his intense joy at this proof of Eugenia's remembrance.

"But," said Parkhurst blankly, "you see, old man, you 'd been the last man at the spring, and I kinder thought" —

"Don't think," said Bray promptly, "and above all, don't talk; not a word to the boys

of this. Stay! Give me the paper and the sprig. I've got to go to San Francisco next week, and I'll take care of it and think it out!" He knew that Parkhurst might be tempted to talk, but without the paper his story would be treated lightly. Parkhurst handed him the paper, and the two men returned to the camp-fire.

That night Bray slept but little. The superstition of the lover is no less keen than that of the gambler, and Bray, while laughing at Parkhurst's extravagant fancy, I am afraid was equally inclined to believe that their good fortune came through Eugenia's influence. At least he should tell her so, and her precious note became now an invitation as well as an excuse for seeking her. The only fear that possessed him was that she might have expected some acknowledgment of her note before she left that afternoon; the only thing he could not understand was how she had managed to convey the note to the spring, for she could not have taken it herself. But this would doubtless be explained by her in San Francisco, whither he intended to seek her. His affairs, the purchasing of machinery for their new

claim, would no doubt give him easy access to her father.

But it was one thing to imagine this while procuring a new and fashionable outfit in San Francisco, and quite another to stand before the "palatial" residence of the Neworths on Rincon Hill, with the consciousness of no other introduction than the memory of the Neworths' discourtesy on the mountain, and, even in his fine feathers, Bray hesitated. At this moment a carriage rolled up to the door, and Eugenia, an adorable vision of laces and silks, alighted.

Forgetting everything else, he advanced toward her with outstretched hand. He saw her start, a faint color come into her face; he knew he was recognized; but she stiffened quickly again, the color vanished, her beautiful gray eyes rested coldly on him for a moment, and then, with the faintest inclination of her proud head, she swept by him and entered the house.

But Bray, though shocked, was not daunted, and perhaps his own pride was awakened. He ran to his hotel, summoned a messenger, inclosed her note in an envelope, and added these lines: —

DEAR MISS NEWORTH, — I only wanted to thank you an hour ago, as I should like to have done before, for the kind note which I inclose, but which you have made me feel I have no right to treasure any longer, and to tell you that your most generous wish and prophecy has been more than fulfilled.

Yours, very gratefully,

EDMUND BRAY.

Within the hour the messenger returned with the still briefer reply: —

"Miss Neworth has been fully aware of that preoccupation with his good fortune which prevented Mr. Bray from an earlier acknowledgment of her foolish note."

Cold as this response was, Bray's heart leaped. She *had* lingered on the summit, and *had* expected a reply. He seized his hat, and, jumping into the first cab at the hotel door, drove rapidly back to the house. He had but one idea, to see her at any cost, but one concern, to avoid a meeting with her father first, or a denial at her very door.

He dismissed the cab at the street corner and began to reconnoitre the house. It had a large garden in the rear, reclaimed from

the adjacent "scrub oak" infested sand hill, and protected by a high wall. If he could scale that wall, he could command the premises. It was a bright morning; she might be tempted into the garden. A taller scrub oak grew near the wall; to the mountain-bred Bray it was an easy matter to swing himself from it to the wall, and he did. But his momentum was so great that he touched the wall only to be obliged to leap down into the garden to save himself from falling there. He heard a little cry, felt his feet strike some tin utensil, and rolled on the ground beside Eugenia and her overturned watering-pot.

They both struggled to their feet with an astonishment that turned to laughter in their eyes and the same thought in the minds of each.

"But we are not on the mountains now, Mr. Bray," said Eugenia, taking her handkerchief at last from her sobering face and straightening eyebrows.

"But we are quits," said Bray. "And you now know my real name. I only came here to tell you why I could not answer your letter the same day. I never got it —

I mean," he added hurriedly, "another man got it first."

She threw up her head, and her face grew pale. "*Another* man got it," she repeated, "and *you* let another man" —

"No, no," interrupted Bray imploringly. "You don't understand. One of my partners went to the spring that afternoon, and found it; but he neither knows who sent it, nor for whom it was intended." He hastily recounted Parkhurst's story, his mysterious belief, and his interpretation of the note. The color came back to her face and the smile to her lips and eyes. "I had gone twice to the spring after I saw you, but I could n't bear its deserted look without you," he added boldly. Here, seeing her face grew grave again, he added, "But how did you get the letter to the spring? and how did you know that it was found that day?"

It was her turn to look embarrassed and entreating, but the combination was charming in her proud face. "I got the little schoolboy at the summit," she said, with girlish hesitation, "to take the note. He knew the spring, but he did n't know *you*. I told him — it was very foolish, I know —

to wait until you came for water, to be certain that you got the note, to wait until you came up, for I thought you might question him, or give him some word." Her face was quite rosy now. "But," she added, and her lip took a divine pout, "he said he waited *two hours;* that you never took the *least concern* of the letter or him, but went around the mountain side, peering and picking in every hole and corner of it, and then he got tired and ran away. Of course I understand it now, it was n't *you;* but oh, please; I beg you, Mr. Bray, don't!"

Bray released the little hand which he had impulsively caught, and which had allowed itself to be detained for a blissful moment.

"And now, don't you think, Mr. Bray," she added demurely, "that you had better let me fill my pail again while you go round to the front door and call upon me properly?"

"But your father" —

"My father, as a well-known investor, regrets exceedingly that he did not make your acquaintance more thoroughly in his late brief interview. He is, as your foreman knows, exceedingly interested in the

mines on Eureka ledge. He will be glad if you will call." She led him to a little door in the wall, which she unbolted. "And now 'Jill' must say good-by to 'Jack,' for she must make herself ready to receive a Mr. Bray who is expected."

And when Bray a little later called at the front door, he was respectfully announced. He called another day, and many days after. He came frequently to San Francisco, and one day did not return to his old partners. He had entered into a new partnership with one who he declared "had made the first strike on Eureka mountain."

MR. BILSON'S HOUSEKEEPER

I

When Joshua Bilson, of the Summit House, Buckeye Hill, lost his wife, it became necessary for him to take a housekeeper to assist him in the management of the hotel. Already all Buckeye had considered this a mere preliminary to taking another wife, after a decent probation, as the relations of housekeeper and landlord were confidential and delicate, and Bilson was a man, and not above female influence. There was, however, some change of opinion on that point when Miss Euphemia Trotter was engaged for that position. Buckeye Hill, which had confidently looked forward to a buxom widow or, with equal confidence, to the promotion of some pretty but inefficient chambermaid, was startled by the selection of a maiden lady of middle age, and above the medium height, at once serious, precise, and masterful, and to all appearances outrageously

competent. More carefully "taking stock" of her, it was accepted she had three good points, — dark, serious eyes, a trim but somewhat thin figure, and well-kept hands and feet. These, which in so susceptible a community would have been enough, in the words of one critic, "to have married her to three men," she seemed to make of little account herself, and her attitude toward those who were inclined to make them of account was ceremonious and frigid. Indeed, she seemed to occupy herself entirely with looking after the servants, Chinese and Europeans, examining the bills and stores of traders and shopkeepers, in a fashion that made her respected and — feared. It was whispered, in fact, that Bilson stood in awe of her as he never had of his wife, and that he was "henpecked in his own farmyard by a strange pullet."

Nevertheless, he always spoke of her with a respect and even a reverence that seemed incompatible with their relative positions. It gave rise to surmises more or less ingenious and conflicting: Miss Trotter had a secret interest in the hotel, and represented a San Francisco syndicate; Miss Trotter was a

woman of independent property, and had advanced large sums to Bilson; Miss Trotter was a woman of no property, but she was the only daughter of — variously — a late distinguished nobleman, a ruined millionaire, and a foreign statesman, bent on making her own living.

Alas, for romance! Miss Euphemia Trotter, or "Miss E. Trotter," as she preferred to sign herself, loathing her sentimental prefix, was really a poor girl who had been educated in an Eastern seminary, where she eventually became a teacher. She had survived her parents and a neglected childhood, and had worked hard for her living since she was fourteen. She had been a nurse in a hospital, an assistant in a reformatory, had observed men and women under conditions of pain and weakness, and had known the body only as a tabernacle of helplessness and suffering; yet had brought out of her experience a hard philosophy which she used equally to herself as to others. That she had ever indulged in any romance of human existence, I greatly doubt; the lanky girl teacher at the Vermont academy had enough to do to push herself forward without en-

tangling girl friendships or confidences, and so became a prematurely hard duenna, paid to look out for, restrain, and report, if necessary, any vagrant flirtation or small intrigue of her companions. A pronounced "old maid" at fifteen, she had nothing to forget or forgive in others, and still less to learn from them.

It was spring, and down the long slopes of Buckeye Hill the flowers were already effacing the last dented footprints of the winter rains, and the winds no longer brought their monotonous patter. In the pine woods there were the song and flash of birds, and the quickening stimulus of the stirring aromatic sap. Miners and tunnelmen were already forsaking the direct road for a ramble through the woodland trail and its sylvan charms, and occasionally breaking into shouts and horseplay like great boys. The schoolchildren were disporting there; there were some older couples sentimentally gathering flowers side by side. Miss Trotter was also there, but making a short cut from the bank and express office, and by no means disturbed by any gentle reminiscence of her girlhood or any other instinctive participa-

tion in the wanton season. Spring came, she knew, regularly every year, and brought "spring cleaning" and other necessary changes and rehabilitations. This year it had brought also a considerable increase in the sum she was putting by, and she was, perhaps, satisfied in a practical way, if not with the blind instinctiveness of others. She was walking leisurely, holding her gray skirt well over her slim ankles and smartly booted feet, and clear of the brushing of daisies and buttercups, when suddenly she stopped. A few paces before her, partly concealed by a myrtle, a young woman, startled at her approach, had just withdrawn herself from the embrace of a young man and slipped into the shadow. Nevertheless, in that moment, Miss Trotter's keen eyes had recognized her as a very pretty Swedish girl, one of her chambermaids at the hotel. Miss Trotter passed without a word, but gravely. She was not shocked nor surprised, but it struck her practical mind at once that if this were an affair with impending matrimony, it meant the loss of a valuable and attractive servant; if otherwise, a serious disturbance of that servant's duties. She

must look out for another girl to take the place of Frida Pauline Jansen, that was all. It is possible, therefore, that Miss Jansen's criticism of Miss Trotter to her companion as a "spying, jealous old cat" was unfair. This companion Miss Trotter had noticed, only to observe that his face and figure were unfamiliar to her. His red shirt and heavy boots gave no indication of his social condition in that locality. He seemed more startled and disturbed at her intrusion than the girl had been, but that was more a condition of sex than of degree, she also knew. In such circumstances it is the woman always who is the most composed and self-possessed.

A few days after this, Miss Trotter was summoned in some haste to the office. Chris Calton, a young man of twenty-six, partner in the Roanoke Ledge, had fractured his arm and collar-bone by a fall, and had been brought to the hotel for that rest and attention, under medical advice, which he could not procure in the Roanoke company's cabin. She had a retired, quiet room made ready. When he was installed there by the doctor she went to see him, and found

a good-looking, curly headed young fellow, even boyish in appearance and manner, who received her with that air of deference and timidity which she was accustomed to excite in the masculine breast — when it was not accompanied with distrust. It struck her that he was somewhat emotional, and had the expression of one who had been spoiled and petted by women, a rather unusual circumstance among the men of the locality. Perhaps it would be unfair to her to say that a disposition to show him that he could expect no such "nonsense" *there* sprang up in her heart at that moment, for she never had understood any tolerance of such weakness, but a certain precision and dryness of manner was the only result of her observation. She adjusted his pillow, asked him if there was anything that he wanted, but took her directions from the doctor, rather than from himself, with a practical insight and minuteness that was as appalling to the patient as it was an unexpected delight to Dr. Duchesne. "I see you quite understand me, Miss Trotter," he said, with great relief.

"I ought to," responded the lady dryly. "I had a dozen such cases, some of them

with complications, while I was assistant at the Sacramento Hospital."

"Ah, then!" returned the doctor, dropping gladly into purely professional detail, "you 'll see this is very simple, not a comminuted fracture; constitution and blood healthy; all you 've to do is to see that he eats properly, keeps free from excitement and worry, but does not get despondent; a little company; his partners and some of the boys from the Ledge will drop in occasionally; not too much of *them*, you know; and of course, absolute immobility of the injured parts." The lady nodded; the patient lifted his blue eyes for an instant to hers with a look of tentative appeal, but it slipped off Miss Trotter's dark pupils — which were as abstractedly critical as the doctor's — without being absorbed by them. When the door closed behind her, the doctor exclaimed: "By Jove! you 're in luck, Chris! That 's a splendid woman! Just the one to look after you!" The patient groaned slightly. "Do what she says, and we 'll pull you through in no time. Why! she 's able to adjust those bandages herself!"

This, indeed, she did a week later, when

the surgeon had failed to call, unveiling his neck and arm with professional coolness, and supporting him in her slim arms against her stiff, erect buckramed breast, while she replaced the splints with masculine firmness of touch and serene and sexless indifference. His stammered embarrassed thanks at the relief — for he had been in considerable pain — she accepted with a certain pride as a tribute to her skill, a tribute which Dr. Duchesne himself afterward fully indorsed.

On reëntering his room the third or fourth morning after his advent at the Summit House, she noticed with some concern that there was a slight flush on his cheek and a certain exaltation which she at first thought presaged fever. But an examination of his pulse and temperature dispelled that fear, and his talkativeness and good spirits convinced her that it was only his youthful vigor at last overcoming his despondency. A few days later, this cheerfulness not being continued, Dr. Duchesne followed Miss Trotter into the hall. "We must try to keep our patient from moping in his confinement, you know," he began, with a slight smile, "and he seems to be somewhat of an

emotional nature, accustomed to be amused and — er — er — petted."

"His friends were here yesterday," returned Miss Trotter dryly, "but I did not interfere with them until I thought they had stayed long enough to suit your wishes."

"I am not referring to *them*," said the doctor, still smiling; "but you know a woman's sympathy and presence in a sick-room is often the best of tonics or sedatives."

Miss Trotter raised her eyes to the speaker with a half critical impatience.

"The fact is," the doctor went on, "I have a favor to ask of you for our patient. It seems that the other morning a new chambermaid waited upon him, whom he found much more gentle and sympathetic in her manner than the others, and more submissive and quiet in her ways — possibly because she is a foreigner, and accustomed to servitude. I suppose you have no objection to *her* taking charge of his room?"

Miss Trotter's cheek slightly flushed. Not from wounded vanity, but from the consciousness of some want of acumen that had made her make a mistake. She had

really believed, from her knowledge of the patient's character and the doctor's preamble, that he wished *her* to show some more kindness and personal sympathy to the young man, and had even been prepared to question its utility! She saw her blunder quickly, and at once remembering that the pretty Swedish girl had one morning taken the place of an absent fellow servant, in the rebound from her error, she said quietly: "You mean Frida! Certainly! she can look after his room, if he prefers her." But for her blunder she might have added conscientiously that she thought the girl would prove inefficient, but she did not. She remembered the incident of the wood; yet if the girl had a lover in the wood, she could not urge it as a proof of incapacity. She gave the necessary orders, and the incident passed.

Visiting the patient a few days afterward, she could not help noticing a certain shy gratitude in Mr. Calton's greeting of her, which she quietly ignored. This forced the ingenuous Chris to more positive speech. He dwelt with great simplicity and enthusiasm on the Swedish girl's gentleness and sympathy. "You have no idea of — her —

natural tenderness, Miss Trotter," he stammered naïvely. Miss Trotter, remembering the wood, thought to herself that she had some faint idea of it, but did not impart what it was. He spoke also of her beauty, not being clever enough to affect an indifference or ignorance of it, which made Miss Trotter respect him and smile an unqualified acquiescence. Frida certainly was pretty! But when he spoke of her as "Miss Jansen," and said she was so much more "ladylike and refined than the other servants," she replied by asking him if his bandages hurt him, and, receiving a negative answer, graciously withdrew.

Indeed, his bandages gave him little trouble now, and his improvement was so marked and sustained that the doctor was greatly gratified, and, indeed, expressed as much to Miss Trotter, with the conscientious addition that he believed the greater part of it was due to her capable nursing! "Yes, ma'am, he has to thank *you* for it, and no one else!"

Miss Trotter raised her dark eyes and looked steadily at him. Accustomed as he was to men and women, the look strongly held him. He saw in her eyes an intelli-

gence equal to his own, a knowledge of good and evil, and a toleration and philosophy, equal to his own, but a something else that was as distinct and different as their sex. And therein lay its charm, for it merely translated itself in his mind that she had very pretty eyes, which he had never noticed before, without any aggressive intellectual quality. And with this, alas! came the man's propensity to reason. It meant of course but *one* thing; he saw it all now! If *he*, in his preoccupation and coolness, had noticed her eyes, so also had the younger and emotional Chris. The young fellow was in love with her! It was that which had stimulated his recovery, and she was wondering if he, the doctor, had observed it. He smiled back the superior smile of our sex in moments of great inanity, and poor Miss Trotter believed he understood her. A few days after this, she noticed that Frida Jansen was wearing a pearl ring and a somewhat ostentatious locket. She remembered now that Mr. Bilson had told her that the Roanoke Ledge was very rich, and that Calton was likely to prove a profitable guest. But it was not *her* business.

It became her business, however, some days later, when Mr. Calton was so much better that he could sit in a chair, or even lounge listlessly in the hall and corridor. It so chanced that she was passing along the upper hall when she saw Frida's pink cotton skirt disappear in an adjacent room, and heard her light laugh as the door closed. But the room happened to be a card-room reserved exclusively for gentlemen's poker or euchre parties, and the chambermaids had no business there. Miss Trotter had no doubt that Mr. Calton was there, and that Frida knew it; but as this was an indiscretion so open, flagrant, and likely to be discovered by the first passing guest, she called to her sharply. She was astonished, however, at the same moment to see Mr. Calton walking in the corridor at some distance from the room in question. Indeed, she was so confounded that when Frida appeared from the room a little flurried, but with a certain audacity new to her, Miss Trotter withheld her rebuke, and sent her off on an imaginary errand, while she herself opened the card-room door. It contained simply Mr. Bilson, her employer; his expla-

nation was glaringly embarrassed and unreal! Miss Trotter affected obliviousness, but was silent; perhaps she thought her employer was better able to take care of himself than Mr. Calton.

A week later this tension terminated by the return of Calton to Roanoke Ledge, a convalescent man. A very pretty watch and chain afterward were received by Miss Trotter, with a few lines expressing the gratitude of the ex-patient. Mr. Bilson was highly delighted, and frequently borrowed the watch to show to his guests as an advertisement of the healing powers of the Summit Hotel. What Mr. Calton sent to the more attractive and flirtatious Frida did not as publicly appear, and possibly Mr. Bilson did not know it. The incident of the card-room was forgotten. Since that discovery, Miss Trotter had felt herself debarred from taking the girl's conduct into serious account, and it did not interfere with her work.

II

One afternoon Miss Trotter received a message that Mr. Calton desired a few moments' private conversation with her. A little curious, she had him shown into one of the sitting-rooms, but was surprised on entering to find that she was in the presence of an utter stranger! This was explained by the visitor saying briefly that he was Chris's elder brother, and that he presumed the name would be sufficient introduction. Miss Trotter smiled doubtfully, for a more distinct opposite to Chris could not be conceived. The stranger was apparently strong, practical, and masterful in all those qualities in which his brother was charmingly weak. Miss Trotter, for no reason whatever, felt herself inclined to resent them.

"I reckon, Miss Trotter," he said bluntly, "that you don't know anything of this business that brings me here. At least," he hesitated, with a certain rough courtesy, "I should judge from your general style and gait that you would n't have let it go on so far if you had, but the fact is, that darned fool brother of mine — beg your pardon! —

has gone and got himself engaged to one of the girls that help here, — a yellow-haired foreigner, called Frida Jansen."

"I was not aware that it had gone so far as that," said Miss Trotter quietly, "although his admiration for her was well known, especially to his doctor, at whose request I selected her to especially attend to your brother."

"The doctor is a fool," broke in Mr. Calton abruptly. "He only thought of keeping Chris quiet while he finished his job."

"And really, Mr. Calton," continued Miss Trotter, ignoring the interruption, "I do not see what right *I* have to interfere with the matrimonial intentions of any guest in this house, even though or — as you seem to put it — *because* the object of his attentions is in its employ."

Mr. Calton stared — angrily at first, and then with a kind of wondering amazement that any woman — above all a housekeeper — should take such a view. "But," he stammered, "I thought you — you — looked after the conduct of those girls."

"I 'm afraid you 've assumed too much," said Miss Trotter placidly. "My business

is to see that they attend to their duties here. Frida Jansen's duty was — as I have just told you — to look after your brother's room. And as far as I understand you, you are not here to complain of her inattention to that duty, but of its resulting in an attachment on your brother's part, and, as you tell me, an intention as to her future, which is really the one thing that would make my 'looking after her conduct' an impertinence and interference! If you had come to tell me that he did *not* intend to marry her, but was hurting her reputation, I could have understood and respected your motives."

Mr. Calton felt his face grow red and himself discomfited. He had come there with the firm belief that he would convict Miss Trotter of a grave fault, and that in her penitence she would be glad to assist him in breaking off the match. On the contrary, to find himself arraigned and put on his defense by this tall, slim woman, erect and smartly buckramed in logic and whalebone, was preposterous! But it had the effect of subduing his tone.

"You don't understand," he said awk-

wardly yet pleadingly. "My brother is a fool, and any woman could wind him round her finger. *She* knows it. She knows he is rich and a partner in the Roanoke Ledge. That 's all she wants. She is not a fit match for him. I 've said he was a fool — but, hang it all! that 's no reason why he should marry an ignorant girl — a foreigner and a servant — when he could do better elsewhere."

"This would seem to be a matter between you and your brother, and not between myself and my servant," said Miss Trotter coldly. "If you cannot convince *him*, your own brother, I do not see how you expect me to convince *her*, a servant, over whom I have no control except as a mistress of her *work*, when, on your own showing, she has everything to gain by the marriage. If you wish Mr. Bilson, the proprietor, to threaten her with dismissal unless she gives up your brother," — Miss Trotter smiled inwardly at the thought of the card-room incident, — "it seems to me you might only precipitate the marriage."

Mr. Calton looked utterly blank and hopeless. His reason told him that she was

right. More than that, a certain admiration for her clear-sightedness began to possess him, with the feeling that he would like to have "shown up" a little better than he had in this interview. If Chris had fallen in love with *her* — but Chris was a fool and would n't have appreciated her!

"But you might talk with her, Miss Trotter," he said, now completely subdued. "Even if you could not reason her out of it, you might find out what she expects from this marriage. If you would talk to her as sensibly as you have to me" —

"It is not likely that she will seek my assistance as you have," said Miss Trotter, with a faint smile which Mr. Calton thought quite pretty, "but I will see about it."

Whatever Miss Trotter intended to do did not transpire. She certainly was in no hurry about it, as she did not say anything to Frida that day, and the next afternoon it so chanced that business took her to the bank and post-office. Her way home again lay through the Summit woods. It recalled to her the memorable occasion when she was first a witness to Frida's flirtations. Neither that nor Mr. Bilson's presumed gallantries,

however, seemed inconsistent, in Miss Trotter's knowledge of the world, with a serious engagement with young Calton. She was neither shocked nor horrified by it, and for that reason she had not thought it necessary to speak of it to the elder Mr. Calton.

Her path wound through a thicket fragrant with syringa and southernwood; the faint perfume was reminiscent of Atlantic hillsides, where, long ago, a girl teacher, she had walked with the girl pupils of the Vermont academy, and kept them from the shy advances of the local swains. She smiled — a little sadly — as the thought occurred to her that after this interval of years it was again her business to restrain the callow affections. Should she never have the match-making instincts of her sex; never become the trusted confidante of youthful passion? Young Calton had not confessed his passion to *her*, nor had Frida revealed her secret. Only the elder brother had appealed to her hard, practical common sense against such sentiment. Was there something in her manner that forbade it? She wondered if it was some uneasy consciousness of this quality which had impelled her to snub the elder Calton, and rebelled against it.

It was quite warm ; she had been walking a little faster than her usual deliberate gait, and checked herself, halting in the warm breath of the syringas. Here she heard her name called in a voice that she recognized, but in tones so faint and subdued that it seemed to her part of her thoughts. She turned quickly and beheld Chris Calton a few feet from her, panting, partly from running and partly from some nervous embarrassment. His handsome but weak mouth was expanded in an apologetic smile ; his blue eyes shone with a kind of youthful appeal so inconsistent with his long brown mustache and broad shoulders that she was divided between a laugh and serious concern.

"I saw you — go into the wood — but I lost you," he said, breathing quickly, "and then when I did see you again — you were walking so fast I had to run after you. I wanted — to speak — to you — if you 'll let me. I won't detain you — I can walk your way."

Miss Trotter was a little softened, but not so much as to help him out with his explanation. She drew her neat skirts aside, and made way for him on the path beside her.

"You see," he went on nervously, taking long strides to her shorter ones, and occasionally changing sides in his embarrassment, "my brother Jim has been talking to you about my engagement to Frida, and trying to put you against her and me. He said as much to me, and added you half promised to help him! But I did n't believe him — Miss Trotter! — I know you would n't do it — you have n't got it in your heart to hurt a poor girl! He says he has every confidence in you — that you 're worth a dozen such girls as she is, and that I 'm a big fool or I 'd see it. I don't say you 're not all he says, Miss Trotter; but I 'm not such a fool as he thinks, for I know your *goodness* too. I know how you tended me when I was ill, and how you sent Frida to comfort me. You know, too, — for you 're a woman yourself, — that all you could say, or anybody could, would n't separate two people who loved each other."

Miss Trotter for the first time felt embarrassed, and this made her a little angry. "I don't think I gave your brother any right to speak for me or of me in this matter," she said icily; "and if you are quite

satisfied, as you say you are, of your own affection and Frida's, I do not see why you should care for anybody's interference."

"Now you are angry with me," he said in a doleful voice which at any other time would have excited her mirth; "and I 've just done it. Oh, Miss Trotter, don't! Please forgive me! I did n't mean to say your talk was no good. I did n't mean to say you could n't help us. Please don't be mad at me!"

He reached out his hand, grasped her slim fingers in his own, and pressed them, holding them and even arresting her passage. The act was without familiarity or boldness, and she felt that to snatch her hand away would be an imputation of that meaning, instead of the boyish impulse that prompted it. She gently withdrew her hand as if to continue her walk, and said, with a smile: —

"Then you confess you need help — in what way?"

"With her!"

Miss Trotter stared. "With *her!*" she repeated. This was a new idea. Was it possible that this common, ignorant girl was playing and trifling with her golden opportunity? "Then you are not quite sure of her?" she said a little coldly.

"She 's so high spirited, you know," he said humbly, "and so attractive, and if she thought my friends objected and were saying unkind things of her, — well!" — he threw out his hands with a suggestion of hopeless despair — "there 's no knowing what she might do."

Miss Trotter's obvious thought was that Frida knew on which side her bread was buttered; but remembering that the proprietor was a widower, it occurred to her that the young woman might also have it buttered on both sides. Her momentary fancy of uniting two lovers somehow weakened at this suggestion, and there was a hardening of her face as she said, "Well, if *you* can't trust her, perhaps your brother may be right."

"I don't say that, Miss Trotter," said Chris pleadingly, yet with a slight wincing at her words; "*you* could convince her, if you would only try. Only let her see that she has some other friends beside myself. Look! Miss Trotter, I 'll leave it all to you — there! If you will only help me, I will promise not to see her — not to go near her again — until you have talked with her.

There! Even my brother would not object to that. And if he has every confidence in you, I 'm showing you I 've more — don't you see? Come, now, promise — won't you, dear Miss Trotter?" He again took her hand, and this time pressed a kiss upon her slim fingers. And this time she did not withdraw them. Indeed, it seemed to her, in the quick recurrence of her previous sympathy, as if a hand had been put into her loveless past, grasping and seeking hers in its loneliness. None of her school friends had ever appealed to her like this simple, weak, and loving young man. Perhaps it was because they were of her own sex, and she distrusted them.

Nevertheless, this momentary weakness did not disturb her good common sense. She looked at him fixedly for a moment, and then said, with a faint smile, "Perhaps she does not trust *you*. Perhaps you cannot trust yourself."

He felt himself reddening with a strange embarrassment. It was not so much the question that disturbed him as the eyes of Miss Trotter; eyes that he had never before noticed as being so beautiful in their color,

clearness, and half tender insight. He dropped her hand with a new-found timidity, and yet with a feeling that he would like to hold it longer.

"I mean," she said, stopping short in the trail at a point where a fringe of almost impenetrable "buckeyes" marked the extreme edge of the woods, — "I mean that you are still very young, and as Frida is nearly your own age," — she could not resist this peculiarly feminine innuendo, — "she may doubt your ability to marry her in the face of opposition; she may even think my interference is a proof of it; but," she added quickly, to relieve his embarrassment and a certain abstracted look with which he was beginning to regard her, "I will speak to her, and," she concluded playfully, "you must take the consequences."

He said "Thank you," but not so earnestly as his previous appeal might have suggested, and with the same awkward abstraction in his eyes. Miss Trotter did not notice it, as her own eyes were at that moment fixed upon a point on the trail a few rods away. "Look," she said in a lower voice, "I may have the opportunity now,

for there is Frida herself passing." Chris turned in the direction of her glance. It was indeed the young girl walking leisurely ahead of them. There was no mistaking the smart pink calico gown in which Frida was wont to array her rather generous figure, nor the long yellow braids that hung Marguerite-wise down her back. With the consciousness of good looks which she always carried, there was, in spite of her affected ease, a slight furtiveness in the occasional swift turn of her head, as if evading or seeking observation.

"I will overtake her and speak to her now," continued Miss Trotter. "I may not have so good a chance again to see her alone. You can wait here for my return, if you like."

Chris started out of his abstraction. "Stay!" he stammered, with a faint, tentative smile. "Perhaps — don't you think? — I had better go first and tell her you want to see her. I can send her here. You see, she might" — He stopped.

Miss Trotter smiled. "It was part of your promise, you know, that you were *not* to see her again until I had spoken. But

no matter! Have it as you wish. I will wait here. Only be quick. She has just gone into the grove."

Without another word the young man turned away, and she presently saw him walking toward the pine grove into which Frida had disappeared. Then she cleared a space among the matted moss and chickweed, and, gathering her skirts about her, sat down to wait. The unwonted attitude, the whole situation, and the part that she seemed destined to take in this sentimental comedy affected her like some quaint child's play out of her lost youth, and she smiled, albeit with a little heightening of color and lively brightening of her eyes. Indeed, as she sat there listlessly probing the roots of the mosses with the point of her parasol, the casual passer-by might have taken herself for the heroine of some love tryst. She had a faint consciousness of this as she glanced to the right and left, wondering what any one from the hotel who saw her would think of her sylvan rendezvous; and as the recollection of Chris kissing her hand suddenly came back to her, her smile became a nervous laugh, and she found herself actually blushing!

But she was recalled to herself as suddenly. Chris was returning. He was walking directly towards her with slow, determined steps, quite different from his previous nervous agitation, and as he drew nearer she saw with some concern an equally strange change in his appearance: his colorful face was pale, his eyes fixed, and he looked ten years older. She rose quickly.

"I came back to tell you," he said, in a voice from which all trace of his former agitation had passed, "that I relieve you of your promise. It won't be necessary for you to see — Frida. I thank you all the same, Miss Trotter," he said, avoiding her eyes with a slight return to his boyish manner. "It was kind of you to promise to undertake a foolish errand for me, and to wait here, and the best thing I can do is to take myself off now and keep you no longer. Please don't ask me *why*. Sometime I may tell you, but not now."

"Then you have seen her?" asked Miss Trotter quickly, premising Frida's refusal from his face.

He hesitated a moment, then he said gravely, "Yes. Don't ask me any more,

Miss Trotter, please. Good-by!" He paused, and then, with a slight, uneasy glance toward the pine grove, "Don't let me keep you waiting here any longer." He took her hand, held it lightly for a moment, and said, "Go, now."

Miss Trotter, slightly bewildered and unsatisfied, nevertheless passed obediently out into the trail. He gazed after her for a moment, and then turned and began rapidly to ascend the slope where he had first overtaken her, and was soon out of sight. Miss Trotter continued her way home; but when she had reached the confines of the wood she turned, as if taking some sudden resolution, and began slowly to retrace her steps in the direction of the pine grove. What she expected to see there, possibly she could not have explained; what she actually saw after a moment's waiting were the figures of Frida and Mr. Bilson issuing from the shade! Her respected employer wore an air of somewhat ostentatious importance mingled with rustic gallantry. Frida's manner was also conscious with gratified vanity; and although they believed themselves alone, her voice was already pitched into a high key of ner-

vous affectation, indicative of the peasant. But there was nothing to suggest that Chris had disturbed them in their privacy and confidences. Yet he had evidently seen enough to satisfy himself of her faithlessness. Had he ever suspected it before?

Miss Trotter waited only until they had well preceded her, and then took a shorter cut home. She was quite prepared that evening for an interview which Mr. Bilson requested. She found him awkward and embarrassed in her cool, self-possessed presence. He said he deemed it his duty to inform her of his approaching marriage with Miss Jansen; but it was because he wished distinctly to assure her that it would make no difference in Miss Trotter's position in the hotel, except to promote her to the entire control of the establishment. He was to be married in San Francisco at once, and he and his wife were to go abroad for a year or two; indeed, he contemplated eventually retiring from business. If Mr. Bilson was uneasily conscious during this interview that he had once paid attentions to Miss Trotter, which she had ignored, she never betrayed the least recollection of it. She

thanked him for his confidence and wished him happiness.

Sudden as was this good fortune to Miss Trotter, an independence she had so often deservedly looked forward to, she was, nevertheless, keenly alive to the fact that she had attained it partly through Chris's disappointment and unhappiness. Her sane mind taught her that it was better for him; that he had been saved an ill-assorted marriage; that the girl had virtually rejected him for Bilson before he had asked her mediation that morning. Yet these reasons failed to satisfy her feelings. It seemed cruel to her that the interest which she had suddenly taken in poor Chris should end so ironically in disaster to her sentiment and success to her material prosperity. She thought of his boyish appeal to her; of what must have been his utter discomfiture in the discovery of Frida's relations to Mr. Bilson that afternoon, but more particularly of the singular change it had effected in him. How nobly and gently he had taken his loss! How much more like a man he looked in his defeat than in his passion! The element of respect which had been wanting in

her previous interest in him was now present in her thoughts. It prevented her seeking him with perfunctory sympathy and worldly counsel; it made her feel strangely and unaccountably shy of any other expression.

As Mr. Bilson evidently desired to avoid local gossip until after his marriage, he had enjoined secrecy upon her, and she was also debarred from any news of Chris through his brother, who, had he known of Frida's engagement, would have naturally come to her for explanation. It also convinced her that Chris himself had not revealed anything to his brother.

III

When the news of the marriage reached Buckeye Hill, it did not, however, make much scandal, owing, possibly, to the scant number of the sex who are apt to disseminate it, and to many the name of Miss Jansen was unknown. The intelligence that Mr. Bilson would be absent for a year, and that the superior control of the Summit Hotel would devolve upon Miss Trotter, *did*,

however, create a stir in that practical business community. No one doubted the wisdom of the selection. Every one knew that to Miss Trotter's tact and intellect the success of the hotel had been mainly due. Possibly, the satisfaction of Buckeye Hill was due to something else. Slowly and insensibly Miss Trotter had achieved a social distinction; the wives and daughters of the banker, the lawyer, and the pastor had made much of her, and now, as an independent woman of means, she stood first in the district. Guests deemed it an honor to have a personal interview with her. The governor of the State and the Supreme Court judges treated her like a private hostess; middle-aged Miss Trotter was considered as eligible a match as the proudest heiress in California. The old romantic fiction of her past was revived again, — they had known she was a "real lady" from the first! She received these attentions, as became her sane intellect and cool temperament, without pride, affectation, or hesitation. Only her dark eyes brightened on the day when Mr. Bilson's marriage was made known, and she was called upon by James Calton.

"I did you a great injustice," he said, with a smile.

"I don't understand you," she replied a little coldly.

"Why, this woman and her marriage," he said; "you must have known something of it all the time, and perhaps helped it along to save Chris."

"You are mistaken," returned Miss Trotter truthfully. "I knew nothing of Mr. Bilson's intentions."

"Then I have wronged you still more," he said briskly, "for I thought at first that you were inclined to help Chris in his foolishness. Now I see it was your persuasions that changed him."

"Let me tell you once for all, Mr. Calton," she returned with an impulsive heat which she regretted, "that I did not interfere in any way with your brother's suit. He spoke to me of it, and I promised to see Frida, but he afterwards asked me not to. I know nothing of the matter."

"Well," laughed Mr. Calton, "*whatever* you did, it was most efficacious, and you did it so graciously and tactfully that it has not altered his high opinion of you, if, indeed,

he has n't really transferred his affections to you."

Luckily Miss Trotter had her face turned from him at the beginning of the sentence, or he would have noticed the quick flush that suddenly came to her cheek and eyes. Yet for an instant this calm, collected woman trembled, not at what Mr. Calton might have noticed, but at what *she* had noticed in *herself*. Mr. Calton, construing her silence and averted head into some resentment of his familiar speech, continued hurriedly: —

"I mean, don't you see, that I believe no other woman could have influenced my brother as you have."

"You mean, I think, that he has taken his broken heart very lightly," said Miss Trotter, with a bitter little laugh, so unlike herself that Mr. Calton was quite concerned at it.

"No," he said gravely. "I can't say *that!* He 's regularly cut up, you know! And changed; you 'd hardly know him. More like a gloomy crank than the easy fool he used to be," he went on, with brotherly directness. "It would n't be a bad thing, you know, if you could manage to see him, Miss

Trotter! In fact, as he 's off his feed, and has some trouble with his arm again, owing to all this, I reckon, I 've been thinking of advising him to come up to the hotel once more till he 's better. So long as *she* 's gone it would be all right, you know!"

By this time Miss Trotter was herself again. She reasoned, or thought she did, that this was a question of the business of the hotel, and it was clearly her duty to assent to Chris's coming. The strange yet pleasurable timidity which possessed her at the thought she ignored completely.

He came the next day. Luckily, she was so much shocked by the change in his appearance that it left no room for any other embarrassment in the meeting. His face had lost its fresh color and round outline; the lines of his mouth were drawn with pain and accented by his drooping mustache; his eyes, which had sought hers with a singular seriousness, no longer wore the look of sympathetic appeal which had once so exasperated her, but were filled with an older experience. Indeed, he seemed to have approximated so near to her own age that, by one of those paradoxes of the emotions, she

felt herself much younger, and in smile and eye showed it; at which he colored faintly. But she kept her sympathy and inquiries limited to his physical health, and made no allusion to his past experiences; indeed, ignoring any connection between the two. He had been shockingly careless in his convalescence, had had a relapse in consequence, and deserved a good scolding! His relapse was a reflection upon the efficacy of the hotel as a perfect cure! She should treat him more severely now, and allow him no indulgences! I do not know that Miss Trotter intended anything covert, but their eyes met and he colored again. Ignoring this also, and promising to look after him occasionally, she quietly withdrew.

But about this time it was noticed that a change took place in Miss Trotter. Always scrupulously correct, and even severe in her dress, she allowed herself certain privileges of color, style, and material. She, who had always affected dark shades and stiff white cuffs and collars, came out in delicate tints and laces, which lent a brilliancy to her dark eyes and short crisp black curls, slightly tinged with gray. One warm summer even-

ing she startled every one by appearing in white, possibly a reminiscence of her youth at the Vermont academy. The masculine guests thought it pretty and attractive; even the women forgave her what they believed a natural expression of her prosperity and new condition, but regretted a taste so inconsistent with her age. For all that, Miss Trotter had never looked so charming, and the faint autumnal glow in her face made no one regret her passing summer.

One evening she found Chris so much better that he was sitting on the balcony, but still so depressed that she was compelled so far to overcome the singular timidity she had felt in his presence as to ask him to come into her own little drawing-room, ostensibly to avoid the cool night air. It was the former "card-room" of the hotel, but now fitted with feminine taste and prettiness. She arranged a seat for him on the sofa, which he took with a certain brusque boyish surliness, the last vestige of his youth.

"It 's very kind of you to invite me in here," he began bitterly, "when you are so run after by every one, and to leave Judge

Fletcher just now to talk to me, but I suppose you are simply pitying me for being a fool!"

"I thought you were imprudent in exposing yourself to the night air on the balcony, and I think Judge Fletcher is old enough to take care of himself," she returned, with the faintest touch of coquetry, and a smile which was quite as much an amused recognition of that quality in herself as anything else.

"And I 'm a baby who can't," he said angrily. After a pause he burst out abruptly: "Miss Trotter, will you answer me one question?"

"Go on," she said smilingly.

"Did you know — that — woman was engaged to Bilson when I spoke to you in the wood?"

"No!" she answered quickly, but without the sharp resentment she had shown at his brother's suggestion. "I only knew it when Mr. Bilson told me the same evening."

"And *I* only knew it when news came of their marriage," he said bitterly.

"But you must have suspected something when you saw them together in the wood," she responded.

"When I saw them together in the wood?" he repeated dazedly.

Miss Trotter was startled, and stopped short. Was it possible he had not seen them together? She was shocked that she had spoken; but it was too late to withdraw her words. "Yes," she went on hurriedly, "I thought that was why you came back to say that I was not to speak to her."

He looked at her fixedly, and said slowly: "You thought that? Well, listen to me. I saw *no one!* I knew nothing of this! I suspected nothing! I returned before I had reached the wood — because — because — I had changed my mind!"

"Changed your mind!" she repeated wonderingly.

"Yes! Changed my mind! I could n't stand it any longer! I did not love the girl — I never loved her — I was sick of my folly. Sick of deceiving you and myself any longer. Now you know why I did n't go into the wood, and why I did n't care where she was nor who was with her!"

"I don't understand," she said, lifting her clear eyes to his coldly.

"Of course you don't," he said bitterly.

"I did n't understand myself! And when you do understand you will hate and despise me — if you do not laugh at me for a conceited fool! Hear me out, Miss Trotter, for I am speaking the truth to you now, if I never spoke it before. I never asked the girl to marry me! I never said to *her* half what I told to *you*, and when I asked you to intercede with her, I never wanted you to do it — and never expected you would."

"May I ask *why* you did it then?" said Miss Trotter, with an acerbity which she put on to hide a vague, tantalizing consciousness.

"You would not believe me if I told you, and you would hate me if you did." He stopped, and, locking his fingers together, threw his hands over the back of the sofa and leaned toward her. "You never liked me, Miss Trotter," he said more quietly; "not from the first! From the day that I was brought to the hotel, when you came to see me, I could see that you looked upon me as a foolish, petted boy. When I tried to catch your eye, you looked at the doctor, and took your speech from him. And yet I thought I had never seen a woman so great

and perfect as you were, and whose sympathy I longed so much to have. You may not believe me, but I thought you were a queen, for you were the first lady I had ever seen, and you were so different from the other girls I knew, or the women who had been kind to me. You may laugh, but it 's the truth I 'm telling you, Miss Trotter ! "

He had relapsed completely into his old pleading, boyish way — it had struck her even as he had pleaded to her for Frida !

" I knew you did n't like me that day you came to change the bandages. Although every touch of your hands seemed to ease my pain, you did it so coldly and precisely ; and although I longed to keep you there with me, you scarcely waited to take my thanks, but left me as if you had only done your duty to a stranger. And worst of all," he went on more bitterly, " the doctor knew it too — guessed how I felt toward you, and laughed at me for my hopelessness ! That made me desperate, and put me up to act the fool. I did ! Yes, Miss Trotter ; I thought it mighty clever to appear to be in love with Frida, and to get him to ask to have her attend me regularly. And when

you simply consented, without a word or thought about it and me, I knew I was nothing to you."

Miss Trotter felt a sudden thrill. The recollection of Dr. Duchesne's strange scrutiny of her, of her own mistake, which she now knew might have been the truth — flashed across her confused consciousness in swift corroboration of his words. It was a *double* revelation to her; for what else was the meaning of this subtle, insidious, benumbing sweetness that was now creeping over her sense and spirit and holding her fast. She felt she ought to listen no longer — to speak — to say something — to get up — to turn and confront him coldly — but she was powerless. Her reason told her that she had been the victim of a trick — that having deceived her once, he might be doing so again; but she could not break the spell that was upon her, nor did she want to. She must know the culmination of this confession, whose preamble thrilled her so strangely.

"The girl was kind and sympathetic," he went on, "but I was not so great a fool as not to know that she was a flirt and accus-

tomed to attention. I suppose it was in my desperation that I told my brother, thinking he would tell you, as he did. He would not tell me what you said to him, except that you seemed to be indignant at the thought that I was only flirting with Frida. Then I resolved to speak with you myself — and I did. I know it was a stupid, clumsy contrivance. It never seemed so stupid before I spoke to you. It never seemed so wicked as when you promised to help me, and your eyes shone on me for the first time with kindness. And it never seemed so hopeless as when I found you touched with my love for another. You wonder why I kept up this deceit until you promised. Well, I had prepared the bitter cup myself — I thought I ought to drink it to the dregs."

She turned quietly, passionately, and, standing up, faced him with a little cry. "Why are you telling me this *now?*"

He rose too, and catching her hands in his, said, with a white face, "Because I love you."

. . . . . .

Half an hour later, when the under-housekeeper was summoned to receive Miss Trot-

ter's orders, she found that lady quietly writing at the table. Among the orders she received was the notification that Mr. Calton's rooms would be vacated the next day. When the servant, who, like most of her class, was devoted to the good-natured, good-looking, liberal Chris, asked with some concern if the young gentleman was no better, Miss Trotter, with equal placidity, answered that it was his intention to put himself under the care of a specialist in San Francisco, and that she, Miss Trotter, fully approved of his course. She finished her letter, — the servant noticed that it was addressed to Mr. Bilson at Paris, — and, handing it to her, bade that it should be given to a groom, with orders to ride over to the Summit post-office at once to catch the last post. As the housekeeper turned to go, she again referred to the departing guest. "It seems such a pity, ma'am, that Mr. Calton could n't stay, as he always said you did him so much good." Miss Trotter smiled affably. But when the door closed she gave a hysterical little laugh, and then, dropping her handsome gray-streaked head in her slim hands, cried like a girl — or, indeed, as she had never cried when a girl.

When the news of Mr. Calton's departure became known the next day, some lady guests regretted the loss of this most eligible young bachelor. Miss Trotter agreed with them, with the consoling suggestion that he might return for a day or two. He did return for a day; it was thought that the change to San Francisco had greatly benefited him, though some believed he would be an invalid all his life.

Meantime Miss Trotter attended regularly to her duties, with the difference, perhaps, that she became daily more socially popular and perhaps less severe in her reception of the attentions of the masculine guests. It was finally whispered that the great Judge Boompointer was a serious rival of Judge Fletcher for her hand. When, three months later, some excitement was caused by the intelligence that Mr. Bilson was returning to take charge of his hotel, owing to the resignation of Miss Trotter, who needed a complete change, everybody knew what that meant. A few were ready to name the day when she would become Mrs. Boompointer; others had seen the engagement ring of Judge Fletcher on her slim finger.

Nevertheless Miss Trotter married neither, and by the time Mr. and Mrs. Bilson had returned she had taken her holiday, and the Summit House knew her no more.

Three years later, and at a foreign Spa, thousands of miles distant from the scene of her former triumphs, Miss Trotter reappeared as a handsome, stately, gray-haired stranger, whose aristocratic bearing deeply impressed a few of her own countrymen who witnessed her arrival, and believed her to be a grand duchess at the least. They were still more convinced of her superiority when they saw her welcomed by the well-known Baroness X., and afterwards engaged in a very confidential conversation with that lady. But they would have been still more surprised had they known the tenor of that conversation.

"I am afraid you will find the Spa very empty just now," said the baroness critically. "But there are a few of your compatriots here, however, and they are always amusing. You see that somewhat faded blonde sitting quite alone in that arbor? That is her position day after day, while her husband openly flirts or is flirted with by half the women

here. Quite the opposite experience one has of American women, where it 's all the other way, is it not? And there is an odd story about her which may account for, if it does not excuse, her husband's neglect. They 're very rich, but they say she was originally a mere servant in a hotel."

"You forget that I told you I was once only a housekeeper in one," said Miss Trotter, smiling.

"Nonsense. I mean that this woman was a mere peasant, and frightfully ignorant at that!"

Miss Trotter put up her eyeglass, and, after a moment's scrutiny, said gently, "I think you are a little severe. I know her; it 's a Mrs. Bilson."

"No, my dear. You are quite wrong. That was the name of her *first* husband. I am told she was a widow who married again — quite a fascinating young man, and evidently her superior — that is what is so funny. She is a Mrs. Calton — 'Mrs. Chris Calton,' as she calls herself."

"Is her husband — Mr. Calton — here?" said Miss Trotter after a pause, in a still gentler voice.

"Naturally not. He has gone on an excursion with a party of ladies to the Schwartzberg. He returns to-morrow. You will find *her* very stupid, but *he* is very jolly, though a little spoiled by women. Why do we always spoil them?"

Miss Trotter smiled, and presently turned the subject. But the baroness was greatly disappointed to find the next day that an unexpected telegram had obliged Miss Trotter to leave the Spa without meeting the Caltons.

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